

Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations: Power of Practices, Practices of Power

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This article demonstrates how the work of Pierre Bourdieu offers a productive way to practice research in international relations. It especially explores the alternatives opened by Bourdieu in terms of a logic of practice and practical sense that refuses an opposition between general theory and empirical research. Bourdieu's preference for a relational approach, which destabilizes the different versions of the opposition between structure and agency, avoids some of the traps commonly found in political science in general and theorizations of international relations in particular: essentialization and ahistoricism; a false dualism between constructivism and empirical research; and an absolute opposition between the collective and the individual. The "thinking tools" of field and habitus, which are both collective and individualized, are examined in order to see how they resist such traps. The article also engages with the question of whether the international itself challenges some of Bourdieu's assumptions, especially when some authors identify a global field of power while others deny that such a field of power could be different from a system of different national fields of power. In this context, the analysis of transversal fields of power must be untied from state centrism in order to discuss the social transformations of power relations in ways that do not oppose a global/international level to a series of national and subnational levels.

Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations

The work of Pierre Bourdieu has had currency among English-speaking audiences for more than 20 years, with Pierre Bourdieu himself developing a dialogue with US and UK sociologists, anthropologists and cultural theorists.¹ Nevertheless, it is only recently that his work has reached the shores of international relations. This may be partly the consequence of ignorance or indifference but also of the way Bourdieu's work destabilizes many influential research traditions, whether "mainstream" or "constructivist." He is sometimes quoted, but the reference tends to be superficial. Moreover, few respond positively to provocations like those Bourdieu delivers in "Vive la crise! For an heterodoxy in social science," one of his more profound interventions in English: "We need some heterodoxy in social science, in order for them to avoid death by suffocation under dogmatism: so let me plagiarize Kant's famous dictum, theory without

¹For a list of works of Pierre Bourdieu and comments about them, see the already long list given by Loïc Wacquant in Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992a).

empirical research is *empty*, empirical research without theory is *blind*' (Bourdieu 1988a:774–785).

The first argument I will develop in this article² is that Pierre Bourdieu has diagnosed one of the key problems of contemporary international studies regarding the relationships between theory, methodology, and empirical research, even though his analyses was concerned with other social sciences, particularly sociology and political science. This problem is especially expressed in the way the discipline of international relations has come to be organized through an opposition between an empiricist–objectivist mainstream and an idealist form of constructivism that neglects the most basic knowledge of how social practices emerge, persist, and constrain actors beyond their individual imaginations and beliefs.³ The second argument is that contemporary students of international relations ought to reflect on this articulation between theory, methods, and analysis of world social practices in order to find alternative ways of doing research that avoid dogmatic statements, imposed methodologies, simplistic dichotomies, and smuggled teleologies. The third argument is that some of Pierre Bourdieu's "thinking tools," specifically the concepts of field and habitus, can be used to analyze contemporary politics in a more accurate way than the current discussions framed by a spatial vision of an international system of states (and its mirror image of national societies territorially bound by the state) and a temporal vision of the globalization of the world (and its mirror image of local parts of it not yet engaged in this movement). This third argument both engages and challenges what Bourdieu has proposed in terms of international social universes and will involve a discussion of the relations between a field of politics, a field of power and a bureaucratic field. As an example, I will discuss the notion of transnational guilds of professionals struggling for power in their respective fields as opening ways of understanding the present "international" which are neither interstate nor global.

The Long March of the Work of Pierre Bourdieu and Its Encounter with IR

Bourdieu began his career in the 1960s and has since become well known in France and the Francophone world. He has also engaged with English-speaking sociologists through many channels, often inviting them to speak while also traveling and lecturing abroad himself. Thus, when Loic Waquant was appointed to Berkeley, he helped to translate Bourdieu's work. There was a fierce controversy with Anthony Giddens about the Third Way and the notion of society, and a collective book arguing with but also against James Coleman about social theory, and the notions of theory and methods. His seminars at Berkeley were published in the 1990s, and there was a series of conferences in Japan, Brazil, and many other places (Bourdieu and Coleman 1991; Bourdieu 1998). All this propelled him to becoming one of the most recognized "world sociologists," while the number of citations of his work in the English-speaking fields of sociology, cultural theory, anthropology, grew exponentially. His impact on political science and international relations has been more limited.

One of the main reasons often given to explain this limited influence is that Bourdieu is both too "French" and a type of "post modern" philosopher. He has been put into the same basket as figures like Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida. He has also been considered a "leftist," a post-Marxist, or a neo-culturalist like Gramsci, Althusser, Balibar, Chomsky or even Negri, Mouffe and Laclau, and as

²I want to thank different commentators for their help and comments on previous versions of this text, especially Rob Walker, Mikael Madsen, and the other authors in this special issue, and Laurent Bonelli and the team at *Cultures & Conflicts*. I also want to thank Damian Fitzpatrick for his help on translation.

³For commentary on this framing of the discipline, see <http://conflicts.revues.org/index1175.html>.

sharing a generalized critique of domination and (American) imperialism. He has been considered to be too obscure, too heavy, with a style that is neither fluid nor elegant, while also being too politically engaged, too radical, insufficiently neutral or scientific. More interestingly, even scholars attracted to constructivist or postmodern traditions have engaged with him only with reluctance, finding his work to be highly empirical and labor intensive. If some were happy to endorse his onto-epistemological positions, especially concerning the critique of rational choice theory, they were more uneasy with his attention to “data,” to “categories,” to “ethnographical interviews,” and to “practices.” Bourdieu challenges the roots of any “decisionist”/“sovereign” statements about what the world means that are given from the “armchair.” He criticizes those who subordinate or simply ignore the views of social actors by avoiding empirical research as well as those who claim that any discourse has the same weight of legitimacy and authority.

Bourdieu’s emphasis on empirical research and objective reality in order to be seriously reflexive and constructivist is certainly distinctive. In contrast to many contemporaries, he has spent his time constructing and using data, doing interviews, conducting large empirical research with a team or laboratory of social scientists. For Bourdieu, constructivism exists in the practice of questioning the results of empirical sociological inquiries with a very high level of reflexivity about both their own conditions of production and their own limits. Epistemological discussion arises from this preliminary work in order to struggle against “pre-notions” embedded into the habitus of researchers in their fieldwork and from the capacity to organize a collective intellectual in order to overcome them. It is never simply a matter of an initial choice, a dogmatic preference, an ontological statement, or a philosophy.

This materialist approach to constructivism, which he shares with other major sociologists, sets up a central opposition between his empirical reflexive sociology of practices and the idealist social theory of norms and ideas that the discipline of international relations largely recognizes under the label of constructivism. For such scholars, in fact, Bourdieu appears as an ally of the opposite side of the objectivist mainstream, as a structural realist, or as a Marxist, despite his position of reflexivity and his engagement with post-structuralism. He is read as too materialist, too linked with the question of interests, too unaware “of the role of ideas, emotions or spontaneous actions” in the world (Accardo 1997; Lane 2000; Butler in Shusterman 1999; McLeod 2005). In order to challenge Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, such scholars often refer to Judith Butler’s account of Rosa Parks as a woman who changed a nation through her own act. As I will suggest below, this idealist critique based on the free will of the individual, or, at best, on the notion of “excess,” of “transgressing the code,” expresses a superficial idea of what empirical research involves and cannot be sustained. Even so, if Bourdieu is known to have criticized the postmodern forms of “discourse” analysis and, more generally, the ambition of figures like Saussure and Derrida to integrate the social sciences into a discipline of general linguistics, he is even more well known in France for his criticism of any form of empiricist positivist epistemology as exemplified by the work of Raymond Boudon. He has spent his life showing the severe limitations and eurocentricism of the rational choice theory and its lack of understanding of what interest, capital, and power mean.

Centrally, and following the path of Marcel Mauss, Karl Polanyi, and Charles Tilly, Bourdieu has shown the strong limitations of any economic version of rationality (whether neo-liberal, Weberian or Marxist) and has insisted on an extended understanding of rationality or more precisely, on an understanding of plural rationalities and reasons that are “practical reasons.” For him, social action has nothing to do with rational choice, except perhaps in very specific crisis situations where the routines of everyday life and the practical sense of

habitus cease to operate. Social action emerges from immanent practices. Here, he also follows Leibniz who, in opposition to Descartes (the first proponent of rational action theory), stated: “We are empirical [i.e., practical, habitual, unthinking] in three quarters of our actions” (Leibniz quoted in Bourdieu 1988a:783). Practice is immanent; social action is not determined by a rational choice. A tennis player who suddenly “decides” to rush the net, has, in practice, nothing in common with the reconstruction of the play by the coach or the TV commentator after the game. The reconstruction might make sense but is not the reason. Why is it then that agents do the only thing that is to be done, more often than chance would predict? Because they anticipate practically the immanent necessity of their social world by following the intuitions of a practical sense that is the product of a lasting subjection to conditions similar to the ones in which they are placed.⁴

This notion of “practical sense” seeks to avoid the reproduction of oppositions between reason and emotion and strategy as consciousness and unconscious or spontaneous acts: oppositions that have become normalized in so much international relations theory. A more complex human anthropology is necessary. The reasons shaping human actions are relational, driven by a practical sense and by a degree of arbitrariness. This is why the social genesis of institutions is so central to understand any course of action. It allows us to understand how the initial violence or arbitrariness of specific reasons for setting rules comes to be normalized, and forgotten. Following the historical trajectories of these actions permits us to understand their deployment, the limited repertoires that each social universe constitutes, and also to unpack the strategies through which any durable institution is legitimized. Norms neither follow rational interests nor emerge from shared beliefs and attitudes, and are even less the result of their dialectical relations. They are the product of the strength of the historical trajectories of an immanent set of actions incorporated into an ethos and a habitus.

So, far from being an empiricist, or even a “realist,” Pierre Bourdieu has been one of the most ironic authors concerning the obsession of the so-called empiricists about their scientificity and their belief in dependent and independent variables as the only form of methodology to be adopted in empirical research in order to discover the rationality of choice. He has shown in detail why the empiricists were less empirical than dogmatic when they attempted to have a minimum of concepts in order to read social reality and to mimic principles of parsimony and elegance in a way that masks their incapacity to explain complex human beings, heterogeneities of practices, and long-term historical transformations. He has also exposed the “politics” of such forms of “empiricism” and its association with the state’s thinking through the operation of dissociation between theory and practice:

Although the greatness of American social science lies, in my eyes at least, in those admirable empirical works containing their own theory produced particularly at Chicago in the forties and fifties but also elsewhere [...] the current intellectual universe continues to be dominated by academic theories conceived as simple scholastic-compilation of canonical theories. And one cannot resist the temptation to apply to the “neo-functionalists” who today are attempting a parody revival of the Parsonian project, Marx’s word according to which historical events and characters repeat themselves, so to speak, twice, “the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.” (Bourdieu 1988a:774)

⁴This is the very specific conception of social action as the product of a practical sense, as a social art (or as a “pure practice without theory” as Durkheim puts it) that is elaborated empirically in Bourdieu’s most famous book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Bourdieu 1979[2010]).

Further,

This compendium of scholastic precepts (such as the requirement of preliminary definitions of concepts, which automatically produce a closure effect) and of technical recipes, whose formalism (as, for instance, in the presentation of data and results) is often closer to the logic of a magic ritual than to that of a rigorous science, is the perfect counterpart to the bastard concepts, neither concrete nor abstract, that pure theoreticians continually invent [...] And this dualism ends up being crushed by the pincer of abstract typologies and testable hypotheses [...] These paired oppositions construct social reality, or more accurately here, they construct the instruments of construction of reality as theories, conceptual schemes, questionnaires, data sets, statistical techniques, and so on. They define the visible and the invisible, the thinkable and the unthinkable; and like all social categories, they hide as much as they reveal, and can reveal only by hiding. (*Ibid.*:776)

To resist this imperial academic policy, Pierre Bourdieu insists on the need to be systematically reflexive and aware of the political effects of simplistic separations between a theory that reduces empirical research to a test and empirical research that refuses to reflect on the condition of its production. For him, Kant's two camps of the blind and the ignorant are often objective allies of the apparent depoliticization of the stakes of academic scholarship. Consequently, a proper analysis has to be shaped neither by an "idealist" view of the world, where ideas, norms, discourses, subjectivity, human freedom, and individuals are at the core of the examination of social sciences, nor by an objectivist, "structuralist" paradigm that essentializes and tries to discover the laws of history and reduces agents to the status of receptacles. Politics is always "dense" within social sciences analysis.

Pierre Bourdieu: A Sociologist Interested in Politics and Domination

While many scholars resist reflexivity about their dualist oppositions between theory and practice, and about their assumptions about history, this is not because they are completely unconscious of the intellectual problem of the separation between theory, methods, and empirical research. Rather, it is because academic politics are involved in this construction of the instruments through which realities are constructed as if these oppositions are simultaneously descriptive *and* prescriptive, with one side always being considered to be positive and the one negative. This is a formulation that easily permits an academic war of positions, a framing of a convenient opposition between "us" and "them."

As Pierre Bourdieu argues,

The rock-bottom antinomy upon which all the divisions of the social scientific field are ultimately founded, is namely, the opposition between objectivism and subjectivism. This basic dichotomy parallels a whole series of other oppositions such as materialism versus idealism, economism versus culturalism, mechanism versus finalism, causal explanation versus interpretive understanding. Just like a mythological system in which every opposition, high/low, male/female, wet/dry, is overdetermined and stands in homologous relations to all the others, so also these "scientific" oppositions contaminate and reinforce each other to shape the practice and products of social science. Their structuring power is the greatest whenever they stand in close affinity with the fundamental oppositions, such as individual versus society (or individualism versus socialism), that organize the ordinary perception of the social and political world. Indeed, such paired concepts are so deeply ingrained in both lay and scientific common sense that only by an extraordinary and constant effort of epistemological vigilance can the sociologist hope to escape these false alternatives. (Bourdieu 1988a:778)

This effort is difficult and, for Bourdieu, should be done through a “collective intellectual.” Most often, scholars do not practice this vigilance and believe the dogmas they are taught in their youth—especially about the distinction between *theory* as consisting of a series of terminologies that explain everything, and *practice* as the experience of fieldwork for testing hypotheses. In doing so, they also affirm the neutrality of social science, hiding the political dimension of academic life under the discourse of science as the “observation of facts.” Of course, this denial of the engagement of academics in the politics of the world allows them to conduct their internal wars by dismissing the existence of any a wars of position or political alignments (Bourdieu 1988b), including struggles to obtain a monopoly on the instruments for evaluating the quality and scientificity of the works of their colleagues (see Kauppi in this issue, pp. 314–326). This politics of the divide between theory and practice must therefore be put at the core of any discussion about any alternatives that can be developed. The categories that are used to interpret practices need to be specified, historicized, and analyzed as products of struggles. This is not just to “thicken” what were thin descriptions by, for example, adding historical accounts, but to envisage a change of methods, of “thinking tools.” Concepts are not only “contested concepts” that an intellectual dialogue can resolve in the future; all categories and classifications are the result of struggles between the different position takings of actors, engaged in specific stakes that they consider central, even though other actors may not be interested.

So, for Bourdieu, justifications of the legitimacy of categories cannot be analyzed through “economies of worth,” despite the attempt of his colleagues Boltanski and Thévenot to find a pragmatic regime of justification of the good, transversal to different fields or social universes (Boltanski and Thevenot 2006:18–20). Categories, including justifications themselves, are always inside a specific “game” and depend on the sense of the game shared by the agents. Each game has a certain history, a trajectory, a genesis, and even more importantly a politics. To try, in the manner of Thevenot and Boltanski, to find an ethical regime of justifications that is more independent from the habitus as shared practices than Bourdieu allows, because the justifications are dependent of the idea of good in a certain society and how this society reflect on it, is in some way misleading because of the form of generalization they assume. It tends to ignore the politics involved in the categorization and to reduce politics to ethics, even if this general economies of worth may help the researcher to give a preliminary approximation which needs to be specified for the specific field in order to show the politics at work on this specific field. The “game” is located in space (with competitors) and in time (with trajectories) and among all these games or social universes, academic games are not an ivory tower detached from the world. Academic games do not judge or deliver the truth of other social games. Their agents are only more interested in the research of truth, but they are also in a position of relative autonomy in relation to other fields, and are especially fragile regarding the field of power of the national state from which they have received their education.

Some of these categories presented by “theorists” as “concepts” often derive from state thinking, terminologies borrowed from state bureaucracies. They are often reproduced by some academics as descriptions of reality, thereby “sanctifying” administrative labels as analytical concepts to be used by a group of researchers with an interest in following a doxic line of thought favored by the state in order to reinforce their own academic institutional positions, even if they are at some risk of losing their scholarly credibility (see Madsen in this issue, pp. 259–275). Labels like terrorism, human trafficking, economic refugee, and national security, even when sanctified by social sciences and transformed by lawyers into judicial categories, are not scholarly concepts or thinking tools but

instruments of a politics of (in)security (Bigo and Hermant 1986). When these labels are used by academics as categories of understanding, the state is articulated through these authors more than they have a capacity to think about the state. The bureaucratic or mundane categories that are elevated to the status of a “concept” by academics and lawyers are not the result of a sovereign capacity by a locutor to have a successful speech act imposing them as knowledge producing truth. They are even less the product of a consensus/dialogue of an epistemic community leading toward an objective regime of truth whose model will be equivalent to logic and mathematics. Rather they are nearly always the product of relations and the circulation of power inside and between fields, as well as an imposition of problems coming from dominant positions.

What is needed to overcome these effects, and which can be called a “second order reflexivity,” is to develop an “objectivation of objectivation” in order to be politically reflexive about this domination. This is needed, first, in relation to the conditions of the possibility of discourse, and second, in relation to the reflexive capacity of the social agents regarding the difficulty of escaping from their own conditions when they are engaged in a field in which they have interests at stake—interests obscuring their reflexivity—even if they can be very lucid concerning games in which they are not engaged.⁵

Armed with this alternative Leibnizian approach of the “practical sense,” Pierre Bourdieu has analyzed in his different books the different social spaces or social universes of the Kabyles, the peasants of his village, artists, school teachers, French academics of the “grandes écoles,” publishing houses, and even more shockingly for his audiences, civil servants, the powerful “noblesse d’État” or those who suffer from the “misery of the world.” Each time, he discusses the “essentialization” or “naturalization” of the world produced by the indigenous categories of each social universe, the struggles for categorization that they create and reproduce, and what they render invisible and unspeakable (the *doxa*) through the symbolic violence they exert as categories.

In sum, for Bourdieu, a researcher needs to be simultaneously a critical constructivist and a defender of empirical research because it is the only way to avoid being either blind or empty. It is also the only serious possibility in order to begin to analyze the practical sense in a proper manner, that is, politically as well as through a description of specific practices.

Practicing Social Sciences: Practices and Practical Sense

Bourdieu’s approach destabilizes the boundaries between general abstraction as theory and fact-finding as methodology; but how can these false oppositions be overcome? For Bourdieu, this requires recognition of the failure of most Western philosophy to describe the diversity of the world, a failure that he understands as a consequence of concepts of Enlightenment and claims about a final homogenization that will eventually reconcile contraries. The possibility of a new grand narrative that is politically innocent and neutral is finished. Once the violence of

⁵It is one of the key elements of debate among French sociologists, including De Certeau, Tourraine or, later, Latour. To what extent are the agents reflexive toward their very own conditions or are they blinded by their own stakes at stake? For Bourdieu, in contrast to the views of many pragmatists or interactionists, the agents have a better sense of the game than the researcher observing them, but they have more difficulties to have knowledge about their own rules of the game, and it is there that the sociologist is more “objective” than the participants. This means she/he can produce specific knowledge that the agents can learn if they are already ready to change the positions of domination inside the field. Reflexivity may bring knowledge, knowledge may bring emancipation, but nothing is given; it is always dependent on the game itself and its historical trajectory. Adopting a more Foucauldian terminology, the relations in the game produce lights and then by definition shadows to the knowledge of the agents. Dezalay and Madsen have developed in their respective works a more profound understanding of this “objectivation of objectivation” that many scholars only interpret as a struggle against some pre-notions.

the constitution of categories is recognized, it is then necessary to understand that theory is always embedded in practices and can never be “extracted” from them. Consequently, it is also necessary to attend to the most humble practices and avoid obsession with struggles between elites (a point that might be interpreted as a self-criticism of his own early work).

For Bourdieu, theorization is the pleasure of understanding everyday practices, the anatomy of taste and distaste, and the logic of distinction by showing the multiple subtleties of human beings and the violent symbolic politics which succeeds in marginalizing some groups and dispossessing them of their possibilities, even if this dispossession sometimes occurs through their own involuntary complicity. Sociology is critical only when the knowledge it produces helps or may help individuals—prisoners of their own stakes in a game—and when this knowledge helps the most dispossessed to better understand what is at stake. Critical here means political, in the sense of a struggle against domination and symbolic violence, but the knowledge produced is situated in time and addresses a specific field. It cannot be a recipe.

This sociology of politics is certainly not designed as a way to reduce everything to a general theory of power with some general atemporal concepts named as field, habitus, justification, and doxa. This would be a return to a grand narrative.⁶ Nevertheless, because this posture flies in the face of overgeneralization and the grand narratives that continue to irrigate many projects of philosophy or “general sociology,” interpretations of Bourdieu by both his adversaries and some of his followers have often reformulated his thinking tools as pure and neutral “concepts” that can be used universally, and have presented them as a way to analyze any form of domination, any field of practices, with the very same methodology being employed for all. However, for Bourdieu, this is exactly what must be rejected. A general theory of power must be avoided as it will reconvene the ontology of the disciplines of traditional philosophy, political science and international relations, as well as a politics in which intellectuals will lead the world. The critique of domination must always be situated in time, space, and subject area and must be highly reflective about its condition of production, its limits, and its possible effects. Otherwise it will become an instrument for a new domination by “pretenders” in the name of hope, emancipation, revolution, or esthetics. A form of sociology, whose effect is to create the belief in an “avant-garde” of intellectuals explaining to the masses their situation, is anything but critical. Instead, it is an instrument of domination in the name of new class categories instrumentalized by some academics seeing themselves as spokespersons of a group, even as spokespersons of democracy itself.

This is what creates disagreement between Bourdieu and the post-Althusserian sociology of Balibar and Rancière that still wants to be “pedagogical” despite its reflexive renewal. The central distinction between these two political sociologies comes from their different views about the role of intellectuals as spokespersons. For Bourdieu, any spokesperson speaking in the name of a group will not represent the group “neutrally”; they will never be “vanishing mediators” (Balibar 2003). Bourdieu’s political position is even more critical toward reformers like Alain Touraine who seeks to give a voice to the poor, the migrants, the women, or any new social movement by speaking for them and allowing them to enter into a public debate through him. For Bourdieu, sociology will not and should not pretend to generate emancipation. The emancipation discourse is only a

⁶As he says, “I reject grand theory. I never theorise, if by that we mean engage in the kind of conceptual gobbledygook [...] that is good for textbooks and which, through an extraordinary misconstrual of the logic of science, passes for Theory in much Anglo-American social science [...] there is no doubt a theory in my work, or better, a set of ‘thinking tools’ visible through the results they yield, but it is not built as such [...] it is a temporary construct which takes shape for and by empirical work” (Bourdieu in Wacquant 1989:50) (reproduced with a modified translation in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992a,b). For discussion, see Mérand and Pouliot (2008).

new “road to servitude” for any people believing the truth claimed by their “representatives,” be they politicians or academics. Prisoners of the magic of ministry, they ignore or actively forget the self-promoting interests of the proclaimed spokespersons.

Reflexivity about the role of spokespersons is especially crucial for academics, who are so often tempted to pretend that they understand better than the agents themselves what they have to do in order to become an “avant-garde” of “resistance.” Knowledge of sociology is never immediately useful for the groups studied and may even be dangerous; but with reflexivity (see Madsen, in this issue), it could help in building some self-defense, as sociology is in some ways a “martial art,” a form of aikido using the strength of the dominant group against him (Bourdieu, Carles, Gonzalez, and Frégosi 2001). The parallel between Bourdieu’s position and the refusal of Michel Foucault to also elaborate on a general theory of power shows that, beyond their differences, they have a common suspicion concerning the ontology of the mainstream as well as that of reformers and neo-Gramscians. The terminologies of domination or symbolic violence are never ahistorical and must be identified and specified.

To sum up, what Pierre Bourdieu’s approach to “practices” offers is an attempt to combine empirical research with political and philosophical reflexivity by trying to overcome tensions between objectivism and subjectivism. His theoretical arguments are rooted in detailed research in very precise locations. He chooses these locations very carefully and examines them with a team of researchers, taking on board discursive frames, prosopography, ethnographical interviews, historical formations of the different kinds of capital, as well as large-scale surveys. Furthermore, he uses interdisciplinary skills, critically using them through a detailed discussion of their conditions of production, as well as discussing their techniques, categories, and implicit epistemological and ontological contradictions.

If Bourdieu is of any value for the study of international relations today, it is because his main contribution has been to work on the redefinition of the relation between theory and practice (Bourdieu 1977) and to insist on the need for academics to engage with this relation in their own research practices.⁷ The key notions of his work are “practice” and “practical sense,” which in some way encapsulate the rejection of dualism between object and subject, materiality and ideas, and all the other dualisms that reproduce a magical realism at the heart of the categories of the Enlightenment and its philosophy (Bourdieu 1994, 1998).

This Bourdieusian notion of practical sense destabilizes both empiricism and popular forms of understanding the meaning of practice as determined by norms. By always referring to the material conditions of these practices, the notion of practical sense obliges the reader to take into account the diversity of systematic anthropological and sociological descriptions of differences (made by the agents, the sociologist and the tensions between the narratives) in order to avoid false universalizations of a specific culture and to analyze the symbolic gains generated by a specific group’s own interest in universalism. The attention to materiality is also opposed to the tendency to reduce the plurality of practices into a discursive homogeneity that flattens differences and privileges nominalism

⁷Needless to say that this “reflexivity about academic practices” has been seen by other scholars as transforming a polite discussion and a dialogue between individuals and disciplines about ideas and concepts into a guerrilla frontline using personal details of the trajectory of the persons to show how they were correlated with what they were saying and how they were practicing their work. Some authors have thought that a counter-insurrection strategy was necessary against this attack on the common grounds for a “conversation” and “a real dialogue,” and began to despise Bourdieu, thereby adding to his fame and attraction for students. The roar from the polemical battle has been quite widespread, but the substantive issues at stake have not been addressed very much, thereby limiting the impact of criticisms about practices of doing theory.

and even essentialism under such labels as “difference” or “difference.” The tendency to homogenize and universalize, now common in narratives about relations between norms and practices in international relations, is almost inevitable when analysis is limited to an argumentative philosophy/philology bereft of serious empirical research on what agents do and think they do at a specific moment.

This is why, methodologically speaking, constructivism exists only in relation to the empirical studies of practices. Indeed, Pierre Bourdieu is a “materialist” struggling against any form of idealist intersubjectivist constructivism that separates ideas, norms, and values from their embedded practices in order to “reconcile” them with interests; against, that is, the kind of “constructivist social theory” that has followed Alexander Wendt (1999) in discussing norms and practices without analyzing the power struggles, strategies of distinction, symbolic violence of “consensus,” and multiple tactics of agents through a detailed empirical analysis of a specific social universe. Indeed, any attempt to combine Bourdieu’s account of practical sense with this form of “soft” or “idealist” constructivism (in the manner of Mérand and Pouliot 2008) would contradict Bourdieu’s core ideas. Bourdieu opposes any “social theorist” speaking about state and society in generalized abstract terms and avoiding the difficult empirical work of in-depth investigation about how many individuals or groups think or speak the same way as the “analyst,” and how many social universes share this so-called academic reading of their lives. Most social theorists and international relations scholars still manage to escape this “objectivation of objectivation” and try to position themselves as superior to the agents and as their spokespersons. This positioning has become even more significant as a consequence of claims about public policy relevance, especially in political science. Bourdieu is a political sociologist, not a political scientist. Indeed, as a sociologist of domination, he is suspicious about any strategy of monopolizing a legitimate discourse, about any attempt by intellectuals to usurp the authority to declare the meaning of society, state, or interstate systems rather than looking at the structural homologies of position taking and objective positions that explain how opinions and even knowledge are formed.⁸

A Relational Approach, Beginning with the “Middle”: The Thinking Tools of Field and Habitus

This confrontation shows why Bourdieu refuses the trilogy of theory, methodology, and the testing of hypotheses and instead focuses on unitary thinking tools (in a tradition of thought which is not so far from the Chicago sociology of deviance). This position permits engagement with both structuralism or holism and constructivism or individualism, as one phenomenon. He is, consequently, radically opposed to a “normative idealist” agenda followed by an attention to interests (or the reverse).⁹ What is central for him is to put the objectivist and subjectivist “moments” in a symbiotic relation. This is a way to break with the

⁸It is important to engage with this heterodoxy of the specific relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methodology as most of the common misunderstandings of Bourdieu’s works by IR scholars now attracted by his work come from the different hierarchy of categories correlated with questions about what reflexivity is, what theory is and what practice is.

⁹In its discussion with Loïc Wacquant, the invocation of some dialectic between the two (analytical) moments seems to be more a facility of language, a rhetorical instrument, than a practice of research. In practice, they are one unique moment. Here, I disagree with many of Bourdieu’s presentations in which genetic structuralism is discussed as if they were two additional moments. The contradictions do not disappear if they are serialized in time. This view goes against some presentations by Loïc Wacquant and Pierre Bourdieu himself. Wacquant is always inspirational in his reading of Bourdieu and my reading is indebted to his, but in their complicit discussion, the argument seems instrumental, as if it was a strategy of rallying other traditions around Bourdieu other instead of radicalizing the critique.

antinomy or the dialectic of agents and structures. For this, he uses the terminologies of field and habitus in order to analyze practices and “practical sense” without reproducing the traditional dichotomies organizing mainstream philosophy: the materiality of things versus discourses and cognition; structure seen as collective and abstract versus the actor seen as an individual and concrete speaking subject permanently conscious of its free will. It is why the terminologies of field and habitus can be considered as symbolic weapons in Bourdieu’s fight against the convergent traditions of philosophy, general sociology, political science, and international relations.

Unfortunately, Bourdieu himself has been sometimes contradictory and unclear. In the struggle to analyze a “society of individuals” without reducing the analysis to a structure/agency debate, for example, he has been accused of being a structuralist because he was engaged in a critique of the root liberal idea of an inescapable free will and consciousness of individuals on the grounds that this philosophical idea isolates and desocializes individuals and makes them dependent on a superior power in the name of their own freedom.¹⁰ He has undoubtedly been better on the double critique of objectivism and subjectivism than on the emergence of any sustained alternative, which does not oscillate between the two “sides” or “polarities.” Thus, it has been with some good reasons that some critics have noted that he has sometimes been incoherent because he often begins his reasoning aligned with the ethnomethodologists, constructivists, and intersubjectivists but finishes it as an objectivist and post-Marxian preconstructing the social as a “given.” This is especially the case when he discusses the structures of the different forms of capital instead of explaining how the social and the different varieties of capital emerge from the action of the relations (Latour 2005; Leander in this issue, pp. 294–313). With this reservation in mind, it is nevertheless interesting to see how the thinking tools of field and habitus do or do not permit him to escape the dilemma of structure and agency, through what can be called a relational approach—an approach that is different from the three positions of individualism, structuralism, and interactionism.

A Relational Approach

Despite his pretense, Bourdieu is far from being the only or the first one to have simultaneously criticized objectivism and subjectivism, as well as interactionism and intersubjectivism, as false alternatives. Among his contemporaries, for example, both Michel Foucault and Paul Veyne have also claimed that practices are central. They have insisted that practices have to be analyzed as relations and not as a set of interactions. The analyst has to “begin immediately with the middle (of the relation) and not with the extremities (who are the individuals) and then with their interactions” (Veyne 1984:176). The metaphor used by Veyne against interactionism and intersubjectivism stresses the illusory light coming from the subject (the individual) in Western thought, which creates shadows upon relations, thereby making them invisible. For Veyne and Foucault, this invisibilization is at the root of the creation of forms of dualism between the subject and the object, the material things and the discourse, the world and the word, belief in free will and free motion of the will, and the interrogation about the social link (contract) that they have already erased, as well as the belief in a natural order that is threatened by change.

¹⁰This line of thought of La Boétie, Machiavelli, and Max Stirner opposes the violent liberalism of Bodin, Hobbes, but also Rousseau and Kant in the construction of notions of freedom and freewill that can be delegated to a collective (see Bigo 2011). In my view, only the first line of thought is compatible with reflexive sociologies like those of Norbert Elias and Bourdieu. See also Louis Dumont and Karl Polanyi on the genesis of individualism.

Although in the different language of Actor-Network Theory (A-NT), Bruno Latour and John Law have also investigated practices in action and insisted on the importance of the hyphen in the A-NT which represents the relational, and they have also emphasized temporality and the fragile making of the social (Law and Hassard 1999; Latour 2005).¹¹ Like Bourdieu, they have all criticized the individualistic approach and the rational choice theory that poses preconstituted identity of the subject as evidence, as a given. They have also disagreed with the structuralist, determinist, or holistic approach associated with Durkheim or Althusserian Marxism in which agents become puppets of historical laws they do not understand.¹² It is important to insist on this point. All these authors, despite their differences, beyond the attacks to which they have been subjected in order to normalize them in one camp or the others, are neither structuralists nor methodological individualists.¹³ They share the double rejection of the false alternative of structure versus individual. This is why they propose a radically different way to conceptualize politics. What is more, they have finally disagreed also with the subtlest forms of interactionism and intersubjectivism inherited from Max Weber and which informs the most interesting visions of norms and practices in international relations today.¹⁴

Even so, the convergence of the critics has not set up alliances among the different approaches of the primacy of relations in the making of the dualism of structure and agency, as each author has rejected the others as an objective ally of one side of the old dichotomy and has cultivated their own distinctiveness, sometimes with strong quarrels who do not do justice to the subtlety of the other author and the proximity of analysis they share but refuse to recognize.¹⁵ Nevertheless, let me try to propose a set of characteristics for a relational approach that avoids the structure-agency dilemma.

A relational approach focuses on the apparent invisibility of the relations between agents rather than the visibility of these same agents. It explains why other approaches are blinded by looking into the light of the “subject,” that is, only the “actor.” This invisibility does not mean preexistence but action in the making that connects the actors and binds them together. By acting, agents are shaped by the relations in which they engage. Their identities, personalities, and even bodies are not autonomous points, but points in relation to other points. The relation of mimesis, of distinction, shapes the agents’ identities. The “deviation,” the “middle” (that is, the relation), forms the extremities (the points), not the reverse. A relational approach is in that sense different from an interactionist approach, as the latter has the tendency to presuppose the existence of

¹¹Their insistence on the time of the action, instantaneous rather than a *longue durée* of the embedded repertoires of action, is certainly one of the most important discussions for understanding a relational approach and its structuration because it gives a different idea of the crystallization of the social and the possibility of its sudden disappearance.

¹²See Jenkins (1992:67–69). See also Bernard Lacroix’s defense of Durkheim against this reductionism (Lacroix 1981).

¹³Bourdieu is often criticized as a structuralist inattentive to individual practices, while Latour is often understood as a methodological individualist and postmodernist.

¹⁴See the intersubjective analysis of Nick Onuf on the rules of the game, the approach of Michel Dobry in terms of sectors and tactics of the agents, the vision of Kratochwil and Lapid on cultural norms, and the definition of practices given by Thierry Balzacq.

¹⁵For Latour, Bourdieu is a structuralist, a Durkheimian or an Althusserian, while for Bourdieu, Latour is a methodological individualist denying politics. Both narratives are of bad faith. Is this because of a Tardian mimesis, as Latour would claim, or the result of a logic of distinction negotiating a monopoly on the alternative to agency and structure, as Bourdieu would propose? A third option would be to see these misreadings as a “Girardian” relationship of mimetic rivalry, in which their proximity reinforces their sense of competition. French academia politics tends to encourage these difficulties in recognizing similarities with other thinkers when they are deploy different terms. This has been especially unfortunate in undermining the emergence of an alternative to the false dualism of structure and agency that both Bourdieu and Latour advocate through a relational approach to practices. However, for an approach that insists on strong differences between Bourdieu and Latour, see Anna Leander in this issue, pp. 294–313.

fully constituted agents first, and then examine their change and interactions. On the contrary, a relational approach will begin with the moment of the making of the action and will consider the agents only when they act in relation to each other.

Drawing a graph of the field is a way to visualize the “distinctive deviations” between the positions of these agents and to visibilize the invisible relations by finding what the best representations of their proximities and distances might be. However, in opposition to structuralisms, a relational approach supposes that the analyst is not determining *a priori* the capacities which are the most important for the actors, since the forms of capital only exist if they are recognized as such in the field and that they may be important in one field and depreciated in another (as with the frequent denial of the role of money in the art field). In that sense, Bourdieu is certainly not a structuralist transcending history, even if it is such a common mistake to read it that way in political science (Seabrooke and Tsingou 2009). In my view, as in the view of many sociologists, he puts change and history at the very core of his research in all his subjects. Trajectory is the key term for understanding the logic of transformations, which are more interesting than the logic of the reproduction of order that fascinates so many specialists in international relations. Sometimes, by speaking like Jacques Monod about the DNA of a structuring structure to explain its position, Bourdieu has used an ambiguous metaphor. His terminology of genetic structuralism has also been understood by some as the possibility of returning to structural analysis as long as change inside the structure was explained, but this move transforms the field into a structure once again and neglects the habitus of the agents and their timely actions. Therefore, for me, and quite distinctively from other contributions in this issue, a relational approach in Bourdieusian terms has to examine change and transformations of specific processes, and at a specific time (and duration). This relational approach will then avoid any idea of structure with its tendency to invoke grand causalities and an explanation of the entire history of humankind. It will also stay away from the Monad’s analogy of DNA as a “grammar of structuring structure” coding and decoding the real, especially now that we know that he was wrong. We have no laws of history, no essential and natural ideas or concepts to discover. Knowledge is limited; always fragile and specific.

A relational approach will finally claim that the specificities of a space (field), its originality, the heterogeneities of the elements nevertheless constitute relations to a certain degree if they are in network. Homogeneity and permanence are not preconditions for relations, even if a specific duration is necessary. The set of relations needs to be analyzed as a “dispositif” in Michel Foucault’s sense. If the relational approach is reduced to one general principle, known as mimesis in Tarde and Latour or distinction in Bourdieu, then this permanent transhistorical principle is at risk of being transformed into a “structuring structure.” The field and habitus of Bourdieu are thinking tools as long as they try to render the diversity of practices, the “bibelot” or “knick knack” that this diversity organizes and which is constituted by a specific game. They lose their characteristics and interest as soon as they are used as instruments for a methodology reproducing a way to “mine” the real and to “explain” it with an economy of words and concepts. A relation cannot be deterministic and predictive in a relational approach. Contrary to some caricatured interpretations of Bourdieu, it is clear that he does not want to reproduce Althusser’s position; he has spent too much time criticizing this form of structuralist and deterministic Marxism (Bourdieu 1975). Far from mimicking Althusser, Bourdieu maintains the reflexivity of the agents and their struggles for classifications, which have a direct impact on the way they act and the relations they have. It is what he calls a “theory effect.” Field and habitus cannot be understood as transhistorical instruments or as new names for the apparatus of power. They are flexible and orientable.

The terminologies of “dispositif” (Foucault), “translation” (Latour), or even “morphogenetic properties” (Dupuy) have certainly to do with a relational approach that avoids as much as possible the idea of determinism (Dupuy 1982; Davidson 1997; Harman 2009). The terminology Bourdieu concerning “structural homology,” which he borrows from Max Weber, is less clear, as this very terminology tends to go against the elements of flexibility and orientability. One never knows exactly if the notion of structural homology is proposed by Bourdieu and his different teams as a way to “predict” a behavior or a position taking from the knowledge of the objective position and as a truth claim of objective knowledge or if it is just, as he points out many times, a correspondence which afterward explains “sufficient reason(s)” for the relations and the origins of the distinctive deviations between the agents. Maybe the divergence with Boltanski, who was increasingly opposed to the first positioning, came from this determinist view that Bourdieu wanted to have in order to demonstrate the value of truth of his own research in academic fights, even if privately, and more publicly at the end of his life, he focused more on the political dimension of his work, than on “scientific” knowledge (destabilizing some of his dogmatic followers).¹⁶

The notion of structural homology is then the most problematic element in Bourdieu’s approach. In my view, it may escape determinism and objectivism only if the understanding of habitus is related to the idea that it is an imperfect grammar of practices full of ambiguities, not a set of (predetermined) practices (that is, the habitus is split), and if the understanding of field is that it gives orientation to these practices, but is not determining them (that is, the field is fractal).

Field and Habitus: Two Descriptions of a Collective of Individuals

The relational approach I have described so far informs, in my reading, the way field and habitus differ from structure and agency. The two sets of terminologies cannot be considered as interchangeable. They illustrate two different modes of reasoning.

With respect to the vision in terms of agency and structure, where the two terms are either independent, opposed or dialectically linked, field and habitus exist only in relation to each other and they are not polarities but “limits.” The term field, for example, cannot be used independently of the term habitus, and vice versa. The habitus is the limit condition of the embodiment of the field. Field and habitus are both instruments to understand that collective and individualized are the single face of a Möbius strip seen from two different angles, because the society is a “society of individuals” as Norbert Elias said before Bourdieu in order to describe specific historical figurations (Elias 1991; Giddens and Elias 1992).

Thus, the field is not an opposition between the collective of the structure versus the individual of the agency, and it is certainly not a dialectic of agency and structure as it is too often interpreted (Pouliot 2008). A field is collective but it is a field of individuals and of the institutions they make, as the field will not exist independently of human action and reflexivity. This is not to say that a field is just a set of interactions between individuals playing a game and having conscious strategies; it is more than that. Bourdieu often insists on this point because he knows well that methodological individualism is a prevalent mode of thinking influencing both rational choice theory and interactionism/intersubjectivism and that his notion of field will be read as another form of interactionism, as a form of conscious calculation inside a strategic game, that is, in a Clausewitzian

¹⁶For a critique of these followers, see Boltanski (2009) and Vrancken and Kutty (2000).

way to analyze continuities even in crisis, as Michel Dobry has done with his notion of sector (Dobry 1986). Bourdieu emphasizes most of his various definitions of the field as not being the result of a conscious game by a group of players.

I could twist Hegel's famous formula and say that *the real is the relational*: what exist in the social world are relations—not interactions between agents or inter-subjective ties between individuals, but objective relations which exist “independently of individual consciousness and will,” as Marx stated. In analytical terms, a field can be defined as a configuration of objective relations between positions. These positions are defined objectively in their existence and in the determinations that they impose on their occupants, agents or institutions by their current and potential situations (*situs*) in the [wider] structure of the distribution of different currencies of power (or of capital), possession of which provides access to specific profits that are up for grabs in the field, at the same time, by their objective relations to other positions (domination, subordination, equivalents and so on). (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992a:20)

The problem with this over-quoted definition of the field as a configuration of objective relations between positions is that it leans toward the other direction with the repetition of the term *objective* three times. Thus, it appears as if the field is either a structure in formation or already formed and imposing itself on agents as recipients. It would, in that case, be an assemblage of invisible relations imposing themselves as “obscure forces” to the agents. Nevertheless, against this deterministic vision of the field, where the field would become atemporal and independent from the agents' interest and *illusio*, Bourdieu argues in almost all his interventions that fields exist only through the properties that agents invest in them, which distances him from a certain Durkheimian holistic vision (see below). Without agent and the actions of these agents in terms of interest at stake, and a capacity to act in a certain spatiotemporal configuration, the field will not exist. Paraphrasing Norbert Elias, it is never productive to oppose the field and the individual agents, as it is *a field of agents*.

The field description depends on the specificities of the groups being investigated, but some problematizations and ways of working arise from the field approach itself in that the terminology of field itself engages in analyzing the field as a “magnetic field” and looks at the “gravitational forces,” that may be centripetal or centrifugal. It also studies the field as “a field of struggles” and not as an alliance of a group, consensus, or epistemic community; struggles that may be symbolically or physically violent but are never nonpolitical. The field is also more or less a “space” which is “strong” or “weak,” “autonomous” or “dominated,” depending on how it would appear clearly or not from the homology between the positions and the position taken. In addition, there is the possibility of distinguishing specific stakes because a field must be regarded in relation to other fields in order to know its degree of autonomy or permeability.

Many intertwined fields populate “society,” or more exactly what could be seen as the universes of the social whose boundaries may be considered through citizenship and/or humanity. If the field is a network, it is a network with boundaries that create effects. In my view, the field supposes that the circulation of power/struggles has a centripetal relational force that attracts agents toward each other while maintaining their distinctive deviations as in a “magnetic field.” This centripetal force is provided by specific stakes for which different agents act/play in order to win or to resist. The centripetal force needs to be stronger than the centrifugal forces dispersing the individuals toward other stakes. It is the strength of the centripetal force that sometimes allows some powerful agents to police the border of the field in order to exclude other agents from the game (by coercion or by instituted rules). But the magnetic field, even with strong “gate-keepers,” may implode or be perturbed by other fields. The boundaries of the field

are then almost always in a process of changing flux. Indeed, fields can merge or differentiate through time (Bigo and Tsoukala 2008).

Often, the moments of strong disputes between agents about their legitimacy and authority are moments allowing a better understanding of boundary effects, but it is difficult to trace a linear genesis and to find a point of “origin” or to understand the boundaries of some fields where the boundaries are connecting points and not barriers or fortresses against other fields. It is rare that the boundaries are “crustacean.” They are more often “points of passage,” “modalities of change of pressure,” even if the national state has partly succeeded, or at least has given to the agents the illusion of its capacity to be a “box,” a “container,” and something “homogeneous.” Fields are more often “composite” or “fractal.” Their power of attraction as a magnetic field may be “weak” in the sense that they are permeated by other fields with more capacity to attract in a different direction, but they are nevertheless fields as long as agents are attracted toward a specific stake.¹⁷

To speak about a field supposes that empirical research has been carried out, which shows what is specifically at stake in the game played by the agents. From this specificity of the stakes involved, it is crucial to understand how agents position or distinguish themselves in that game, along what lines, what kinds of positions are taken in relation to others, and what kind of resources in terms of power they can mobilize in order to play. A field also supposes a certain period of time for the rules of the game to have an effect and to have a certain degree of autonomy.

Thus, once the field of individuals is constituted by what is at stake for specific agents, it generates boundary effects by attracting some agents into it, by distributing and hierarchizing the struggles for positions inside the boundaries between the oldest agents invested into the field—often the ones who have accumulated power—and the newcomers who have succeeded in entering into the field, breaking the boundaries, and challenging the older dominant positions; this is what Bourdieu has called a transversal characteristic of many fields (but not of all): “the struggle between the heirs and the pretenders.” Sometimes the boundaries of the specific field are sufficiently strong to become barriers that protect the “insiders” from those interested in the field, but which do not have enough power to gain access; and sometimes the effects of the field are to exclude previous players or to keep away other agents by generating obscurity about what is at stake there, or by reinforcing their indifference. Conversely, if the field boundaries are weak, the agents may have strong interests at stake, but at key moments they may be submitted to external rules coming from other fields; a situation that I have called acts of piracy. In this case, agents of other fields convert their power to intervene only once in the targeted field and for a short period impose their game, but they soon retreat and have little or even no ambitions to become agents of this field. These actions of piracy, where the alliances do not depend on the proximity of positions of the agents inside a field, are disturbing, but they are frequent in weak fields or in fields that are merging and whose boundaries are impacted onto other ones (Bigo 2011).

Therefore, the boundaries of the different fields and their possible entanglements are constantly shaped and reshaped both by internal struggles and by external interventions of agents of other related fields; the dynamic of fields is the rule, stability is the exception. It is why this notion of field fits so well with any approach insisting on struggles and change, trying to understand social

¹⁷For this notion of a fractal field, see the discussion concerning Bourdieu, the state and the method of the field by (Shapiro 2002). We insist with Shapiro, and against many interpretations, that Bourdieu is not a structuralist: that his notion of field permits creativity and *résistance*, but not through an inner capacity of the agents to deliver a speech act independent from state thinking and *doxa*. This can exist only under specific conditions, which are not related to the “genius” of an individual but with its specific split habitus (see below).

continuities as fragile moments, and analyzing the everyday practices and the emergence of new kinds of practices.

Habitus

The habitus is also both individual and collective. “The habitus, being the product of the incorporation of objective necessity, of necessity turned into virtue, produces strategies which are objectively adjusted to the objective situation even though these strategies are neither the outcome of the explicit aiming at consciously pursued goals, nor the result of some mechanical determination by external causes. Social action is guided by a practical sense, by what we may call a ‘feel for the game’” (Bourdieu 1985; see also Leander 2010:5).

Each individual has a specific trajectory, has simultaneously lived in many fields, and has a unique practical sense than no one can exactly share with him/her. The person in that sense is unique. Nevertheless, this uniqueness is not an absolute singularity, as each habitus connects an individual with other specific agents and represents the transposition of the objective structures of power a person has in the multiple fields that s/he lives in, by enacting them into the subjective structures of action, position taking, and thoughts of the agent. Bourdieu likes the formula that the habitus is “a system of durable and transferable dispositions integrating all past experience,” but as Bernard Lahire has correctly noted (Lahire 2005), this works only when acting in a certain field and not in the other fields of everyday life.

As with the notion of field, it is necessary to explore the difference between different ways of analyzing the habitus and the correlative “strategies” of distinction. My view goes against attempts to strategize the habitus as a conscious choice, in a manner that returns to rational choice theory or a Clausewitzian understanding of habitus as choice or tactics, and also against the view of that analyzes a habitus as an interaction organizing a “harmony” between the positions and dispositions, and where the practical sense is perceived as an in-between agency (habitus) and structure (field). As Bourdieu explains in order to clarify the ambiguity of the term strategy:

[T]he sort of conscious search for distinction described by Thorstein Veblen and postulated by the philosophy of action of rational choice theory is in fact the very negation of distinguished conduct as I have analyzed it, and Elster could not be farther from the truth when he assimilates my theory to Veblen’s. For the habitus, standing in a relation of true *ontological complicity* with the field of which it is a product, is the principle of a form of knowledge that does not require consciousness, of an intentionality without intention of a practical mastery of the regularities of the world that allows one to anticipate its future without having to pose it as such. We find here the foundation of the distinction drawn by Husserl, in *Ideen*, between *protension* as the practical aiming of a future-to-be inscribed in the present, and thus grasped as already there and endowed with the doxic modality of the present, and *project* as the positing of a future constituted as such, that is, as something that can happen or not. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b:129)

The habitus is, therefore, a *protension*, an *anticipation* of the actions of other agents of the field *which does not necessarily imply conscious thinking*. It is not a calculation of the next move in a chess game. It is not a strategic interaction generating alliances and struggles coherent with the perceived interests of the agents. It is a practice coming from the inner knowledge of the field and the hysteresis of the behavior concerning the transformation of its boundaries. The habitus is a collective embodiment as much as the field is a field of individuals, but it generates creativity.

This is also the reason the habitus is neither the unconscious versus the conscious nor a semiconscious orientation.¹⁸ In my view, to be coherent with a relational approach the habitus is the description of the possibility of an agent to act through this future anticipated in the present by the embedded knowledge of the field incorporated into him/her through history and memory (read erroneously as the unconscious) and protension (read erroneously as rational anticipation). The habitus generates “disposition.” It is a “grammar” for practices but never the text of the practices or rules imposing themselves automatically. It is a repertoire but not a melody. Thus, it is a *generative principle of regulated improvisations*.

The habitus cannot be considered as the equivalent of the Durkheimian idea of inculcation or obedience to objective structures, but nor is it another name for free will, tactics, or semiconscious calculation. It is a collective disposition embodied into an individual and orienting the practice but at the same time offering uncertainty and ambiguities about the reasons of the action in the making.¹⁹ One of the conclusions of this relational dimension implies that each individual has maybe one habitus, but that this habitus is never a monolith, immutable, or predictable. The habitus is “split,” shattered, more often contradictory than systematic, and has multiple and heterogeneous facets coming from its exposure to multiple fields.²⁰ In that sense, the habitus of an agent may be conceived as a collection of diverse experiences coming from its life in diverse social universes, as a collection of “forms of life” which communicate between them but are not integrated in a coherent fashion; thus, their nonintegration does not allow any certainty in the prediction of behavior. To reduce to one form of life in a specific field, the life of the agents and to generalize it to everyone, is not social science, it is the specter of a (social scientific) police regime predicting the future as a future perfect. The adjustment is never automatic and never conscious even when it happens throughout the repetition of experiences. It depends on the history of the field, of the specific trajectory of the individual into this field, and of its exposure to other fields. The habitus resists the evolving conditions of the field, creates tensions, and is shaken by new experiences (Bourdieu 1997). Life actions are not predictable even if they have reasons that can be understood afterward.

Consequently, the habitus in Bourdieu permanently generates resistance and change to practices of power that try to deprive individuals of their forms of life.

I have repeatedly denounced both this pessimistic functionalism and the dehistoricizing that follows from a strictly structuralist standpoint. Similarly, I do not see how relations of domination, whether material or symbolic, could possibly operate without implying, activating resistance. The dominated, in any social universe, can always exert a certain force, in as much as belonging to a field

¹⁸This semiconscious orientation synthesizing the two levels is developed by Giddens—but Bourdieu does not accept Giddens’ idea. For him, this interpretation is trying to reinstate the rational individual versus something else. Peter Jackson analyzing Bourdieu habitus with Giddens’ language partly misinterpret him (Jackson 2008).

¹⁹It is certainly another common misunderstanding to reframe habitus as a tactic, or to ask to add spontaneity, performativity, emotion, improvisation into habitus (reduced to socialization by an institution). A long line of so-called critics from De Certeau to Judith Butler, even when they seem to agree with Bourdieu, try *de facto* to resuscitate the free will of the agent that a liberal framing refuses to abandon. They want agency, the individual as a stand alone, not as a relational individual. Finally, they end up with a ghost individual actor in needs of a “god” move, a zombie who needs “excess” to act beyond socialization, but they think it is the price to pay for safeguarding the notion of freedom. They are wrong (Bigo 2011).

²⁰The notion of split habitus (*habitus clivé*) has been developed in Pierre Bourdieu (1997) and even more in one of his last courses on Manet. I thank Laurent Bonelli for this information and careful reading of a preliminary version of my paper (Bourdieu 2000).

means by definition that one is capable of producing effects in it. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b:80)

This is central to Bourdieu's sociology. Resistance is permanently active. Even in camps, through their diverse habitus and life trajectories, people resist the program that deprives them of their life (Levi 1996; and contra, Agamben 1998).

The habitus is clearly not a kind of inculcation of obedience in order to reenact some form of spontaneity against a general structure of power. The habitus is not a fatality or a destiny (Bourdieu 1997:95). It is not an embodiment of "norms" that the subject, by its agency, has to overcome by its own will, struggling against itself, as some postmodern, feminist, and pragmatist readings have tried to suggest. Habitus is not obedience. It generates resistance, but resistance does not mean opposition, mobilization, or revolution. Resistance is carried out in each field, in everyday practices, through limited but effective possibilities generated by the inventiveness of the habitus.²¹ Misery, for example, is not total deprivation and is not lived as such except by the representation of the dominant victimizing dominated agents. These dominant agents refuse to see the acts of irony, resistance, and hidden transcripts (to use James Scott's terminology) of their subordinates, but they know they exist and are obliged to live with them; they do not escape unease and fear. But as misery is also objective, this form of resistance can pass paradoxically through the acceptance of domination for a long period by the only ironic reutilization of obedience, with the risk of reproducing the situation (Scott 1990; Bourdieu and Accardo 1999).

Habitus is as political as field. But habitus and fields, in complex societies, are multiple, and mobilization supposes an historical trajectory of collective opposition to a certain form of domination in a field (see the state formation and the role of contestation of the "reason of state" that Bourdieu and Tilly have discussed together). It will not be an automatic reaction of all individuals of a field. Each habitus of an individual is absolutely unique, specific, and cannot be explained through some deterministic patterns of group theory and their statistical correlations, even if each habitus is somewhat shared with others and produces a set of different limited practices. This interpretation works against a reduction of the objectivist moment of the habitus where the habitus is transformed into a simplistic, unique, and deterministic socialization of the individual. This "split habitus" is also different from the idea of a polygon of autonomy under constraints where the subject is once again "free" to choose to act.

So, the habitus and its collection of forms of life are dependant on the fields, which are molding each sense of the game. Each facet of a habitus generates practical sense, routine, patterns that frame the acts of the actors in this field, while other facets of the same habitus coming from different fields can enter into competition in the moment to act and "takes priority." So the apparent "choice" of the individual is unique, but what is seen as the best strategic choice is not a product of free will or a freedom to choose a project among diverse possibilities; it is a protension, a future-to-be inscribed in the present. It comes from the specific combination of positions and trajectories of these "multi-(uni)verses" of relations.

Mapping the Fields and Habitus: Implications of the Techniques

These positions and trajectories are "objective," and they can be traced and mapped. They do not depend on the translation of language (or mind) of brute

²¹This approach of habitus in Bourdieu is not far from the position of Foucault concerning power and resistance as the two extremities of the same relation and cogenerating themselves.

facts or from the ambiguous meanings of memory and narratives. Certainly, Bourdieu is not so far from John Searle, though he does not directly use Searle's distinction between brute facts and social facts as this dichotomy reproduces an artificial division between object and subject. Nevertheless, they both agree that social facts are constructed first in relation to the distribution of material resources and social inequality between the agents, and this is what creates competition (often related to—organized or not—scarcity regarding certain resources or capital); second, that they are social or political in the way they are constructions of categories that justify or legitimize the domination through their symbolic violence and create the complicity of the dominated to their own domination. The struggles between classes emphasized by Marxist scholars are therefore important, but this competition is not limited to the means of production or determined in some final instance by economic conditions, even if in a capitalist society the primacy of economic and monetary capital is transversal. It is necessary to pluralize the meaning of “class” in order to understand the different forms of competition that concern all forms of “classifications” and to insist on the multiplicity of social universes that individuals collectively live in and their incommensurability. Interests are plural, historically constituted, and act like poles of magnetic fields attracting different individuals, thus creating myriads of social spaces. Some universes function through the denial of the central interest of other universes, but they are as rational as others. Nevertheless, Bourdieu refuses the essentialism of the “*classe en soi*” and insists on the historical and social construction of groups where reflexivity is central—an approach he shared with Luc Boltanski about the constitution of groups like the “*cadres*” (Boltanski and Goldhammer 1987). The actions of human beings are always reflexive, but they can be more or less reflexive depending on the different social universes. Reflexivity is not a given of the mind that everybody shares equally but is the result of a process of autonomization of different social universes. Some of these social universes deny the importance of reflexivity and instead privilege immediate action, speed over time for reflexion (for example, financial markets, the police, even journalism), while others value reflexivity and time for thinking (for instance, judges and academics). In this relation with Marxian traditions, Bourdieu adds to the analysis the struggles about the definition of the social classes as symbolic struggles, which are part of the class struggle itself because of their “theory effect.”

The questions of truth, certainty, and prediction, in a social universe where reflexivity is important, are then at the core of his attitude concerning the “scientificity” of structural homologies between the position takings and the objective positions coming from the resources in power. Though these objective positions seem so collective, they are intimately individualized and irreducible in their logic of distinction. They cannot be anticipated as sociological laws. On the contrary, *the way* the position takings, which seem so individualized, so dependent on free will, and inner “taste,” are *de facto* intimately collective. The position takings gather individuals into groups having the same dispositions in terms of preference because their capital and trajectories converge.

The discovery of a structural homology by a multiple correspondence analysis cannot be seen as the discovery of individuals deprived of freedom by structures and laws of nature and cannot be seen as a natural adjustment of different free wills into a spontaneous emergent form. It does not provide certainty. But in that case, what is the regime of truth that permits us to go beyond opinion while refusing the positivist discourse of discovering brute facts? What are the criteria of truth that are validated by a homology of positions? Bourdieu refuses the pure causality between position taking and objective positions. He disagrees with Graham Allison who considers in his formula “what you say is depending on where you sit” that a causality exists (Allison 1971). But if the structural

homology does not count as causality, what is revealed by it? Not much, it can be said. It is not a general rule of a game that can be used for prediction. It is just a specific moment of history and an understanding more profound of the reasons of this moment. But it is precious, and it is why this structural homology needs to be informed through detailed empirical research using proposography, ethnographical interviews, statistics, archives, and discourse analysis in order to show in each case the specificities of the field/habitus/doxa relation, and the specific genesis of the present configuration. Abstract laws of sociology make no sense. Sociology is intimately historical and modest as it takes time and effort, and permits us to understand afterward the reasons of the agents but not to predict what agents will do in the future. Any form of social science pretending to have this knowledge are forms of imposture reproducing the habits of a social knowledge they do not have.

This historicity of political sociology explains the diversity of methods and techniques used for establishing the structural homology that permit us to have a first approximation of a specific field as a social universe with specific boundaries organized around a unique stake. While many prevailing research protocols encourage the repetition of the same methods and techniques in the name of an accumulation of knowledge, a Bourdieusian sociology encourages the use of heterogeneous techniques in order to adjust thinking tools to each specific research site.

Bourdieu has given some indications about his own preferences concerning techniques, explaining that they are not recipes but ways to prepare some of these recipes and that a sociological imagination is an antidote against the dogmatic thinking encouraged by systematic methods and techniques. He says that ethnographic interviews, historical archives, and use of statistical data are necessary for building indicators concerning position takings and objective positions, but they always have to be adjusted to the specific inquiry. Concerning statistics, he says, "if I make extensive use of multiple correspondence analysis, in preference to multivariate regression for instance, it is because correspondence analysis is a relational technique of data analysis whose philosophy corresponds exactly to what, in my view, the reality of the social world is. It is a technique which 'thinks' in terms of relation, as I try to do precisely with the notion of field" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992b:112).

As a result, to analyze a field supposes to search for a homology between the objective positions and the discourses and position takings of the agents. It certainly helps to conduct interviews, to perform participant observation, and to adopt reflexivity on them, but it is insufficient. One cannot carry out only the linear history of the field of agents and to rely on their memory of the game. The construction of a field also supposes a technique that allows an evaluation of the criteria for the objective types and volume of capitals of the specific field. Are they reducible to an economic capital that has been calculated through resources, tax revenues and to a cultural capital evaluated through levels of diplomas? Certainly not. Each field produces a specific form of capital. The crux of the question is the significance of this capital, its relation to other forms of capital, the structural homology between the forms of capital that indicate the objective position in the field and the position taking of the agents, as well as the construction of objective boundaries limiting the space. The "solution" then seems to discover what is the "value," which can generate calculation and create equivalence between capitals and give truth to the homology. But it is a dangerous move to argue for the superiority of the structural homology as a definitive truth; an approach that is too mechanistic will return to a form of archaic structuralism or a neo-Marxist vision; a too informal approach suggesting a homology but with limited evidence will return to an ethnomethodological vision. The oscillation is not avoided in Bourdieu's own work, and the work of statistics and

multiple correspondence analysis, so important for the “distinction” in the anatomy of taste, is completely absent in the genesis of the administrative field where history and archives replace sociology and statistics.

Bourdieu’s Approach to the State as a Field and Its Implications for an International Political Sociology

After many doubts about the potential primacy of an economic field determining the conversion rate of the capitals coming from other fields (resulting in a return to Marxism?), Bourdieu chose to consider that the boundaries of education and economic capital were centrally dependent on the national state as the manifestation of the field of power.²² The state is central for Bourdieu’s theory as it is the only field that generates equivalence or a rate of conversion between different forms of capital by producing a specific capital organizing these equivalences. He uses the metaphor of a meta-field in order to describe the state as a locus where different elites coming from various social fields struggle to control access to the conversion rate between the different forms of capital they have accumulated. It is because this struggle around the exchange rate exists, but also creates an implicit doxa about the role of the public as “neutral,” that the state is so central as a meta-field and has a quasi-monopoly on symbolic violence.

This has implications for research. For example, if the sociologist has to first use national statistical data and then to reframe it, this is because these data are so embedded into the habitus of the agents that the agents act according to the categories that represent them. The agents think themselves through the state categories and this creates a centripetal effect of symbolic complicity toward the power of categories imposed as legitimate categories of the Real. As he says, “To endeavor to think the state is to take the risk of taking over (or being taken over by) a thought of the state” (Bourdieu 1998:35). The agents believe and actively participate in the reproduction of the national state whatever political preferences or even indifference to politics they may have. The process of representation in democracy lives from this confusion between the realm of politics limited to politicians, on one side, and the political activities of the elected or nonelected elites engaged in the national state fields of power, on the other.

The field of politics is thus not democratic. Citizens do not know the internal rules of the game, and their voices are filtered. On the other side, some nonelected agents have more power. Representation is then the most powerful construction of a political myth concerning freedom, equality and democracy, and it is through this logic of the neutralization of the role of the spokesperson that representation institutes that people continue to believe in the existence of the state as the locus of the “liberal democratic” national state where representation is expressed through techniques of democracy (such as nongendered “universal” representation, techniques of delegation, electoral system, and more mundane elements like the voting booth). A long history is at stake here (Garrigou 1988; Lacroix 2001). Nevertheless, centrifugal effects can destabilize national territorial states as ultimate boundaries of fields of power, even if they remain as the central field for the professionals of politics. The field of power is certainly often in coherence with the field of national politics but liberal and capitalist logics, as well as transnational exchanges of symbolic power with international

²²Like both Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu, I use the formula of professionals of politics instead of politicians in order to insist on the fact that professionals do not live for politics but from politics. They tend to monopolize the representation of groups coming from different social universes and select what is considered in their world as political. See also the competition between the professionals of politics and the professionals of media, and the critique of the notion of public opinion.

values play their role too, especially with the international circulation of ideas (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001; Bourdieu 2002).

Consequently, to what extent are the fields of power restricted to the boundaries of a national state? Do they exist transnationally by extension of a domestic field of power into other territories and fields through its historical trajectory? Do they coalesce themselves and create nodes of networks or interconnected fields of power reconfiguring previous boundaries more or less suddenly? Do they merge or entangle without a precise verticalization of their relations of domination and autonomy and create entangled hierarchy? How do they affect the field of politics?

This question of the existence or otherwise of a field or of multiple fields of power with the capacity to convert the different forms of capitals that come from other fields in some other locus than the state is a central question for all researchers working on Europe or on the International (see the Forum in this issue, pp. 327–345). Inspired by Bourdieu's framework as it directly engages his sociology with the political and the international, the question concerns the boundaries of the different fields and their entanglements. Do they converge toward what some researchers call a "global" field of power or not? Accordingly, if a convergence occurs, is this global field of power always contiguous and/or identical to the state or is it an addition of each of them with something more: an "upper level" creating a meta-field of diplomacy? Or is it a transnational field implying that the distinction between national and international as two distinct levels is erroneous and that a transnational field works simultaneously inside the state by the verticalization it produces, and beyond this, by the extension of chain of interdependences? In that case, the legitimization circuits necessary for the success in struggles for competition in the exchange rate between capitals and strategies of representation are not limited to a state or a community of states; they are accepted if they play beyond national citizenship, in relation to claims to regional citizenship or humanity sanctioned by specific international institutions or professional guilds.

To put it another way, as a transnational field exists only through national fields and not as an "upper level" with its own personnel and characteristics, to what extent are social fields with extended relations beyond territorial borders framed or constrained by the imposition of the state as a naturalized boundary imposing itself as a *doxa* for the agents? Do we not have social universes partially ignoring the national/societal framing and structured instead by other logics? Do we have to analyze the international as a space for the circulation of import/export models of national fields of (political) power, or do we have to analyze the international as forms of hybridization of multiple national state models and repertoires and even more importantly as a prolongation of the circuits of legitimization that the state no longer frames through reason of state and national sovereignty? I would say that some bureaucratic fields have emancipated themselves from the authority of the professionals of politics and are key places for the competition in terms of field of power. It is not just a network of governments playing strategically in different arenas (Slaughter 2005), but the global or more exactly the transnational constitution of sectorial or careers "structurations" of different stakes (management logic, penal logics inverting the social logics, (in)security logics destabilizing national sovereign games) that are often born from the transnational hybridization of state bureaucracies and their merging with professional logics both public and private (Bigo and Tsoukala 2008). It has mostly left behind the field of the professionals of politics who are often confined to their own national states, even if the G8 and G20 meetings of head of state show that they try to react.

If the professionals of politics no longer capture the politicization of life, what are the other channels making politics international and relinking the fields of

politics and the field of power? What are the roles of banks, of international organizations dealing with regional and world regulations, of transnational networks of bureaucracies and professions, or of international art as converters of capital coming from other segmented fields? How do these social universes connect or not, convert, and exchange their specific capitals? Do we have to speak of a series of national fields of power entering into diplomatic struggles for import-export competences, of a meta-field of power developing globally and structuring new elites, or to different fields of power aligned along professional guilds and dismantling the national/imperial configurations of so-called states and markets?²³

On the basis of my own research on the professionals of (in)security, I would say that the third option is the most accurate. Transnational guilds of professionals participate to a field of power gathering different nationalities around certain professions. These fields are certainly not an “upper level,” distinct from national fields, and they often do not have a specific personnel whose habitus will be denationalized. Most of the time, they are rooted in the history of the cooperation between agents of diverse national fields with the creation of informal clubs, of transnational organizations specialized on so-called technical subjects (but de facto highly political), and of specific technologies permitting speed in the exchange of data (and often some secrecy). These meetings, organizations, and techniques (software and surveillance tools) permit the accumulation of specific symbolic capital over information concerning risk and threats and may challenge the national professional of politics when they claim to assess the truth about danger. I have described this research elsewhere (Bigo 1994, 1996, 2005, 2011). Here, I only want to convey a sense of the way the notion of global field of power is used in Bourdieu’s work and why it is important for internationalists not to confuse the terms of state, political field, and a global field of power.

In often quoting Bourdieu’s chapter “*Esprits d’État. Genèse et structure du champ bureaucratique*,” (Bourdieu 1994:116–133) some IR scholars have simplified Bourdieu’s views and explain that for him the state as an institution is the meta-field of power allowing the conversion of different forms of capital. Yet Bourdieu has insisted that this was only a working hypothesis during the formation of *Raison d’État* and certainly not an “essence” of the state from its creation to now. Secondly, the field is not the institution; it is always what creates institutions. So the state as a field is not the state as an institution. In addition, and in contrast to IR state centrism, where the state is considered as an “actor,” Bourdieu explains many times that the state is not at all an actor. It is itself a specific field populated by bureaucracies, professionals of politics and private agents whose positions of straddling or multipositioning give them access to the possibility to regulate the different fields, mainly through juridical and financial interventions (Bourdieu in Dezalay and Garth 2002).

In brief, the state does not act: something so difficult to accept for most traditions of IR, drawing on political science and which creates so much misunderstanding (Guzzini 2006). Yet if sociologists agree that the state is not an actor itself, then the question of governing a population needs to be addressed, as well as the question of whether territory acts as a form of management of population. Who is acting? Is it a ruling class, a dominant elite?

To speak of a bureaucratic field, a field of professionals of politics, a field of power without specifying how they are articulated and what their boundaries are is not much of a problem as long as the belief in a territorial management aligning all the boundaries along the territorial border of the state is assumed. But once the idea that the state is acting as the meta-field of power is refused, the

²³See the Forum in this issue, pp. 327–345.

“fix” for identifying boundaries of the field in order to select data disappears, and the transnational reappears. In his later works, Bourdieu has tried to discuss the boundaries of the meta-field of power by pluralizing the possible meta-fields in addressing the competition between spokesperson and experts of different states in order for them to impose their prevailing positions as “global” state, as an “imperial” state controlling the circulation and conversion of the different forms of capital coming from different social fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2005). In his joint work with Yves Dezalay, he shows that no dominant state agents have the possibility of limiting competition and imposing themselves as the unique source of legitimate universalization.

It is this very transnational competition for “universals” which creates specific resources in terms of struggles for those who promote global and universal arguments against those who claim to remain faithful to national sovereignty and territorial frontiers, but it obliges all the “universalizers” to enter into competition between themselves. The meta-field of power is always transcending the boundaries of state power, even the most powerful. No one can have the last word. Therein lies an interesting conundrum that this special issue is trying to explore.

Analyzing the International as the Competition of Transnational Guilds and Professionals of Politics for Authority in Different Fields of Power

The different fields of power are no longer closed by a sovereign tautological argument between exercised power and legitimate authority. The arbitrariness of the claim for universal and global is more obvious than ever. Currently, many fields of expertise, many sectors of life are not dependent on or subordinate to state boundaries and the extent of their territory. They are multiple and transversal to the states as they operate by entanglement with multiple national boundaries, even if they are often limited to specific professions or guilds of specific crafts. A series of “transnational” capitals in formation in many fields destabilizes the fractions of elites supported only by “state” capital and the rate they have imposed in their favor at this scale. Depending on the historicity of the field, the circulation of power and the possibility of conversion of capitals coming from diverse fields are not always regulated by the state, but also by multiple operators and in multiple contexts (Leander in this issue, pp. 294–313; Lebaron 2000; Bigo 2005).

Then, the transnational and international debates return and oblige some reframing of the preliminary thoughts of Bourdieu. Some researchers prefer orthodoxy and disagree with claims about this internationalization or transnationalization of the meta-fields of power. Others insist on the need for inventiveness and the adjustment of thinking tools (see the Forum in this issue, pp. 327–345). In my view, this debate concerns less the use of these terminologies of “field” and “habitus” for the international/transnational than the use of the Bourdieu’s unifying notion of a meta-field of power integrating the other fields and manifested either as the state or as the “global.” Contrary to some critics, Bourdieu has never said that the field of power was restricted to the field of national state power, and he has explained in his critical article against Coleman and social theory in general that the meta-field of power, as in the academic field of world sociology, is transversal and transnational, with dominant effects that are only partly connected with a specific (national state) location (Bourdieu and Coleman 1991). Nevertheless, he had the tendency to admit that historically the bureaucratic field of the royal and then state administration in the European trajectory of national states, which for him was connected with the emergence of the reason of state and the role of lawyers, has given the central place for converting different forms of capitals to the head of state. But he has also explained that, now, different state agents are being increasingly replaced by financial

markets in this role of global conversion of capital that come from different fields (including the international art field) and that they compete globally between national state elites. Thus, the question to address to Bourdieu is not about associating the state with the meta-field of power, but about whether he jumped too quickly to a terminology of “a global field of power” populated only by state elites without asking about the condition of the possibility of its emergence and its restriction to elites. He does not sufficiently ask the questions of the effective boundaries of this “global” field or about the processes at work in the making of this (or these) field(s). The empirical transnational chains of interdependences in that case are at risk of disappearing through the re-emergence of two “levels” of false abstraction: the domestic and the international as a coalescence of the different national fields (see below) or a step toward a borderless and global world in the making.

This is unfortunate as in my view one of the most interesting phenomena that allow us to understand the international politics today is the emergence of *transnational professional guilds* reconfiguring the web of intertwined fields of power and challenging the field of politics. These (bureaucratic) pretenders are the products of the historical process of differentiation and dedifferentiation of various fields of expertise which are no longer “contained” (if they were ever) by the power (including the symbolic power) of the state and even less by the national political field. Consequently, what emerges is not a global field of power in the making or transgovernmental networks working toward a process of “integration.” It is the impossibility of having stable rates of the conversion of capital coming from different fields at the same moment. The main consequence that the structural homology coming from different areas of empirical research seems to point to is the extension of the circuits of interdependence between agents of these fields with forms of legitimization/justification going beyond the national state.

So, as soon as the idea of a meta-field of power by the national state is discussed and that the centripetal force is not equated with the national state’s territorial field, or with a teleological statement about the ineluctability of a globally homogenized field of power (an empire in the sense of Hardt and Negri (2000)), it seems that other centripetal forces may be at work (for example careers or professional guilds) but they are always disrupted in their efforts by centrifugal forces. Transversality as well as transnationality of fields has to be analyzed to see where the boundary effects operate and to what extent they are related or not to territorial state thinking.

The European Union is certainly a place where the intensity of the struggles is the most visible as it has resulted in more official institutions in terms of permanent organizations and operational agencies. An increasing amount of research has already developed a Bourdieusian approach to transnational activities of economic and juridical elites and the constitution of a market of state knowledge in competition for hegemony in terms of so-called “global” governance.

The works of Bourdieu and Dezalay concerning the international circulation of ideas, the emergence of a so-called Washington consensus and its imposition in Latin America, as well as a re-reading of postcolonial situations in a more precise research in terms of power elites have paved the way for other research concerning the situation in Europe (Dezalay and Garth 1996, 2002; Dezalay 2004). Specific inquiries have been carried out concerning European bankers (Lebaron 2000, 2009, 2010) or European entrepreneurs (Dudouet, Grémont, and Pageot 2011). To investigate the constitution of European elites and their symbolic power, research has been developed concerning how the human rights discourses or the idea of a European rule of law are transnationally structuring the games in the social universes of lawyers (Dezalay and Garth 1996, 2010; Dezalay and Madsen 2002, 2009; Mégie 2006; Madsen 2007; Vauchez 2008). More specific

research about the personnel of the institutions and prosopographical analysis has also permitted to understand the specific relations of the Eurocrats (European bureaucrats) with the professionals of politics beyond a neo-institutional analysis and how far they are part or not of the national state fields of power organized by the national elites (Mangenot 2003; Cohen, Dezalay, and Marchetti 2007; Georgakakis and de Lassalle 2007, 2010; Michel and De Lassalle 2007; Georgakakis 2008). Specific studies concerning European diplomats have also permitted us to insist on the relations between careers in international organizations and their relation to the national field of politics by showing how they are simultaneously in both universes and the “split habitus” resulting from that (Buchet de Neuilly 2007; Mérand 2009; Davidshofer 2009 unpub. data; Adler Nissen in this issue, pp. 328–331). A third group of researchers, sometimes named as the IPS Paris school of security studies (including Anthony Amicelle, Tugba Basaran, Didier Bigo, Philippe Bonditti, Laurent Bonelli, Emmanuel-Pierre Guittet, Julien Jeandesboz, Jean-Paul Hanon, Médéric Martin-Mazé, Christian Olsson, Amandine Scherrer, and Anastassia Tsoukala), has also began the mapping of the transatlantic guilds of professionals of (in)security with special attention to the activities of European networks of policemen, intelligence services, military counterterrorist specialists and border guards (Amicelle, Basaran, Bellanova, Bigo, Bonelli, Bonditti, Davidshofer, Holboth, Jeandesboz, Mégie, Olsson, Scheck, and Wessling 2006; Bigo, Bonelli, Guittet, Olsson, and Tsoukala 2006; Bigo 2007, 2011; Bigo, Bonelli, and Deltombe 2008) and their connections with private security managers and logics of surveillance (Scherrer, Guittet, and Bigo 2009; Olsson 2009 unpub. data; Salter 2010).

These researchers, who mainly come from Europe and Canada, are largely critical of the traditional understanding of European studies as a subfield of IR involving discussions between intergovernmentalists and neo-institutionalists. They also share some fundamental findings concerning the misleading dichotomies constructed by European and International studies in terms of “levels of analysis” and the opposition of a domestic and a European or international level. For them, a political sociology interested in the relation of power between the agents struggling for Europe but living off Europe, to paraphrase Max Weber, shows that the analysis of the position and trajectory of the individual agents working in these domains are very often simultaneously (or consequently but with frequent multipositioned forms of authority) agents playing domestically and internationally. The idea that the personnel of the state and the personnel of the main European or international organizations is different, and that they play in different games is contradicted by all the prosopographical research coming from the study of different populations. The connection of the domestic and the international is personalized into the two habitus cohabiting in the very same individual. The problematization in terms of field and habitus of Bourdieu completely renews the fundamentals of European studies and beyond by demonstrating the false dichotomy of roles of agents organized in political science between the IR specialists on one side and the domestic specialists on the other side. Empirical research shows that individuals are “collectivized” as “liaison agents” and are always “double agents” (see Dezalay in this issue, pp. 276–293). They play simultaneously in domestic and transnational fields, which have different stakes, and they know how to play the different games, using and converting resources they have in the tactical moves they implement through their practical sense.

Christophe Charle, in his seminal book *The Crisis of Imperial Societies*, explains how the circuits of legitimization extend with colonial practices at the turn of the twentieth century and the effects of the opposition of national imperialist fields in competition (Charle 2001). Indeed, this is a central element. The historicity of the fields explains their forms of transnationalization and the unequal

capacity of some agents to go abroad, to ally themselves with other actors who have similar stakes but in different countries, or to claim that they represent universal interests in order to delegitimize the ones which are dominant in the national field.

Garth and Dezalay also analyze the importance of the logic of historical construction of fields of power and explain in this issue how the agents and organizations that produce and circulate this state expertise internationally present themselves as the collective embodiment of a globalized field of state power. Nevertheless, these cosmopolitan agents who rely on prescriptive discourses inscribed in promotional strategies seeking to gain the edge in an internationalized competition among professionals of governance, have authority in this international circulation of state expertise only because of their national resources as experts in their own national states and because of their capacities to establish connections between their local interests and the interests of those exporting their strategies. It leads them to explain how this import/export of state expertise works as a cycle or a spiral where each failure is considered as an opportunity for new imports in order to fix previous “problems.” The construction of a transnational space of institutions and elite practices is then inseparable for them from the promotion of national models of the state. It may be the case for the professions highly dependent on the symbolic power of the state such as lawyers or even economists trying to reform governance and to apply a neo-liberal agenda, but it seems that other professions develop instead a hidden transcript of resistance against the promotion of their national state model in general and especially against the promotion of their professionals of politics model. They even tend to recognize themselves transnationally by this common critique against all the national professionals of politics and by a narrative in which they consider themselves to have a better knowledge coming from their own experience and know how which gives them both a better sense of the state than the politicians, and better solutions to solve problems.

Typically, as I have shown in my work, police liaison officers through the discourse of a global struggle against crime have succeeded since the beginning of the twentieth century (ICPC-Interpol) to justify links beyond their national states, more easily than penal judges, who are limited by the territoriality of their jurisdictions. The creation of police “clubs,” and their institutionalization later on, has structured a field of internal security and has led to a reframing of the relations between police officers, antiterrorist specialists, intelligence services, border guards, and immigration offices. This field of internal security after the end of bipolarity has been entangled with that of foreign affairs and external security and has generated exacerbated struggles between police, military, and intelligence services about their duties and missions (Bigo 1994, 1996, 2000a,b, 2001, 2008; Bigo and Tsoukala 2008; Bigo, Carrera, Guild, and Walker 2010). A transatlantic field of professionals of management of unease reconfiguring the boundaries between the different public and private security forces as well as the relations engaging the professionals of (in)security with their professionals of politics has emerged through the impulse of transnational guilds of professionals in struggles for the monopoly of the definition and hierarchization of the threats, the risks, the catastrophes, and what constitutes “fate.” The habitus of the agents has reconfigured the relation between security and “national.” Many factors have created an extension of the circuit of legitimization concerning the circulation of power and among them the emergence of practices concerning the exchange of data, technologies of communication, logics of surveillance at a distance, interest in promoting discourse on global security. It has outdated traditional practices of territorial border controls, of sovereign decisions concerning who is the enemy. The field of power is no longer a pure coalescence of national fields and is not organized through a state doxa favoring the professionals of

politics; other logics are at play with the emergence of European internal security service action and the ongoing role of homeland security department in the United States (Bigo 2011).

The reconfiguration of the relation between (in)security and national sovereignty may end up with a bureaucratic disaffiliation from both the politicians in power and temptations of radical alternatives. It may also generate a feeling of being isolated from the professionals of politics and the public, but to have nevertheless the truth about risk and threats, and then to have specific rights and duties, independently of legality. Far from the hypothesis of governmental networks of Anne Marie Slaughter, which carries an inherent functionalism, the transnational bureaucracies of police, border guards, or judges emerge in opposition to their national professionals of politics discourses and practices, while still relying on their national positions of authority inside the state they come from. The national states are increasingly *degovernmentalized* in the sense of leadership by the professionals of politics over their bureaucracies and by the autonomization of these bureaucracies along the lines of their corporatist interests. The European Union is paving the way for this differentiation through the meetings of specialized councils of ministers taking decisions and the limited effect of the councils of heads of states.

Didier Georgakakis has developed a hypothesis of a bureaucratic field of the European Union where the civil servants of the EU commission have some autonomy regarding the national fields they come from, and he insists on the necessity for them to be “denationalized” in order to show that they are part of this game (Georgakakis 2008). Andy Smith has also analyzed the capacity of the Commission to have long-term strategies that most of the professionals of politics of member states do not have, as they are too involved in short-term electoral games (Joana and Smith 2002). Professional lines of solidarity take over national lines. But this works only because many of these bureaucrats feel that they have much in common in order to be part of a specific, enlightened, “cosmopolitan” group, even if their ideology is to limit the extension of the power of European institutions and to maintain strong links with the sovereign territorial model.²⁴

The more the sociology addresses the dominant elites by detailed empirical research, the more the findings show this ability to “be” a domestic civil servant, who to have been to the same international schools, who go to the same holiday locations and colloquiums, who have intermarried and appear “cosmopolite” and/or to “be” (simultaneously) an international bureaucrat who cultivate all the national networks of politics, economy, family links and appear rooted in a place. It seems that the segmentations of careers, and the different nature and volume of economic and symbolic capital, create for the subaltern positions of the fields, more difficulties to “circulate” and “convert” their resources. Sometimes the moment of the international or European in a career is seen as a detour, profitable or not, when individuals want to return to their initial places. It may be a way to become powerful, it could also be an exit strategy for individuals and groups, whose power is declining locally and who sometimes try to regain it through transnational alliances. It may also, rarely, be a “forced” exit where going international is a sign of weakness inside the domestic games and the fact that being multipositioned nationally and internationally is not always an advantage in both games.

The more a permanent member of staff with a long career in international or European organizations exists, and the more the circulation of this person is regulated by rules escaping national states, the more it creates possibilities of

²⁴European liaison officer policemen are an example of these “cosmopolitan conservatives” mixing a cosmopolitan way of life with a strong nationalist discourse.

autonomization of a group as “specific experts” acting for a certain cause. It is quite strong in the logic of formation of the European Union, with the development of a specific bureaucratic and administrative power not depending on the reason of (national) states. It sometimes destabilizes the relations between “experts” at the transnational scale and national professionals of politics by diminishing the possibility of controls by the latter. But the visibility of the phenomenon is masked by the fact that the professionals of politics still appear to be in charge of the international in a diplomatic space. The possibility in some transnational spaces to be an institutional field where the major positions of power are often possessed by groups and individuals whose interest in the game is marginal with regard to more national games is frequent, meaning that diplomats appear to be subordinates. Its agents and some observers subsequently construct the institutional field as a “servant,” as an “expert,” as someone “depoliticized,” but research shows that it is the best way to frame politics without recognizing this.

Part of the discussion concerning the boundaries of public and private may be reframed as forms of limitations of the last sovereign word of the professionals of politics in their national framing, and it is the same regarding their relations with “civil servants” of international organizations. The lament concerning the end of the state, the diminution of power of governments versus the markets, versus the experts often comes from a profound misunderstanding of these relations between transnational and national fields, because of the still implicit idea that the field of the national state confused with the one of the professionals of politics is by definition the dominant field in the meta-field of power. Furthermore, when it is contested it jumps too quickly to the hypothesis that the boundaries have suddenly expanded toward a unique and global (imperial) field of power and the emergence of a global ruling class or elite. Transnational fields increasingly have their own institutions in networks, but these networks are not functional, they are fields of struggles. They are visibilized by organizations, which in part regroup the individuals engaged in domestic and international activities. If the national state is not an actor but a field of power, often these institutions in networks are also constituting spaces which have specific stakes and are not only arenas of confrontation between national fields of territorialized power.

In conclusion, in my view, the circulation and transformation of power relations in the world increasingly oppose the heirs of the political field and the pretenders of guilds that come from professional and bureaucratic fields, but with very different *rappports de forces* in each field. The transnational guilds (both public and private) of experts present themselves as factors of change, novelty and adaptation to the global against the classics, the ancients trapped in old schemes. In each field, the struggles are shaped differently and depend on stakes which continue to be highly national, but it seems that in a series of fields around the topics of finance, security, and ecology, the struggles oppose the “neomoderns,” the pretenders who are privileging the arguments of universalism, global responsibility, rules of mobility and flexibility versus the “classics” who maintain the arguments of national and international sovereignty, the right to exception, the key principle of territoriality and national identity (Bigo and Tsoukala 2008). The professionals of politics all over the world are challenged, they are often in competition but they all want to keep their right to have the last word in terms of decision, that is, to have the capacity to regulate the conversion rate of the different forms of capital.

Sovereignty is not a solution, it is a problem and needs to be analyzed as a central problem of our time (Walker 2009). Further, sovereignty is the problem of these emergent transnational guilds of professionals always in relations of competition, distinction, and attractions between heirs and pretenders struggling for their own priorities and trying to have the very last word.

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