

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN MANAGEMENT,
ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIETY

Pierre Bourdieu, Organisation, and Management

Edited by
Ahu Tatli, Mustafa Özbilgin, and
Mine Karatas-Özkan



Pierre Bourdieu, Organisation, and Management

Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist, philosopher, and anthropologist, has been widely studied and analysed in academic circles, particularly in sociology, where his ideas about power relations in social life helped to define the contemporary field. While many other sociological theories and figures have been extensively discussed and analysed within the contexts of organisation studies and management, Bourdieu's ideas have, until recently, been largely ignored. Offering an authoritative evaluation of Bourdieu's work, this book provides readers with conceptual frameworks, empirical examples, and methodological considerations for advancing theory and research in management and organisation studies.

This book presents an in-depth review of the relevance of Bourdieu's social theory for organisation and management studies, outlining the key aspects of Bourdieu's approach and situating his work in its historical and intellectual context of the time. An outline of the treatment of Bourdieusian theory by management and organisation scholars and a critique of the selective reception of his work are offered. The first edited collection to explore the benefits of Bourdieusian sociology for a management audience, this book is relevant for theory, research, and practice, and will appeal to an international scholarly audience of academics and research students.

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and Mine Karatas-Özkan**

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Foreword*

The work of Pierre Bourdieu is recognised globally. He is one of the most cited authors regardless of the database consulted in the social sciences, notably Google Scholar (Wacquant, 2014; Chanlat, 2014). It is therefore no wonder that researchers in management and organisation have interested themselves for some time in the work of this French sociologist, translated in numerous languages, especially in English. This book that I have the honour and pleasure to preface is one such exemplary illustration.

The work of Pierre Bourdieu is considerable and fundamental: considerable because he has published numerous books, chapters of books, and articles greatly cited today throughout the world in numerous scientific fields—sociology, anthropology, sciences of education, management and organisational studies, philosophy, ethnology, sciences of language, and so forth—and fundamental for it is founded upon simultaneously theoretical and empirical contributions, which take into account social intelligence while exceeding classic dichotomies—actor-structure, micro-macro, social-historical order (Wacquant, 2013, 2014).

His work is also part of an intellectual lineage that goes back to the founding fathers of sociology: Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, especially in the French school, embodied by Durkheim and Mauss, who sought to develop an integrated and broad vision of social life. As he says himself, “*The real is relational*: it exists in the social world, these are relationships—not intersubjective interactions or relationships between agents, but objective relationship ‘independently of consciences and individual wills’ as Marx said.” He adds further, “The real object of social sciences is neither individual, this *ens realissimum* naively celebrated as the reality of all realities by all ‘methodological individualists’, nor groups as concrete sets of individuals sharing a position and condition, but the relationship between two realizations of historical action in the body and in things” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014: 175).

His work is also indebted to his philosophical culture, forgetting not that Pierre Bourdieu has indeed trained in philosophy, like many other great figures of French sociology, which differentiates him from the many Anglo-Saxon sociologists of his generation, including those in the US (Wacquant,

2013). He thus supported both Bachelard and Canguilhem for the philosophy of science, and the contributions of German philosophy, especially Husserl and Cassirer.

Compared to the work of Giddens, who researched in the field of English, he too surpassed the classical opposition evident in structuration theory (1984, 1987), drawing on the work of many secondary data; Bourdieu's theoretical contribution relies on its own empirical data. From his first ethnological accounts of Kabyle culture, Bourdieu has continued to conduct great sociological surveys in order to explain and understand the articulation of social life in various fields: culture, art, education, the university, the elites, consumption, housing, and so forth (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014).

In this book, *Bourdieu, Organisation, and Management*, edited by our colleagues, Ahu Tatli, Mustafa Özbilgin, and Mine Karatas-Özkan, the different contributors, while all certainly recalling Bourdieu's key concepts, clearly demonstrate how they are powerful for studying certain managerial practices and organisational dynamics. In the case of the field of organisational and management studies, the value of Bourdieu's work has a multiplying effect.

First, it offers a great theoretical interest. Through many developed concepts—field, capital, habitus, doxa, illusio—all interrelated, Bourdieu provides us with conceptual tools of great strength. As he says himself, “the concepts have no other definition than systemic and are built *to be empirically implemented systematically*; notions such as habitus, field and capital can be defined within the theoretical system they represent, and not in isolation” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014: 140). He explained further: “To think in terms of the field, is to *think relationally*” (141), and stresses that this mode of thought is the same relational feature of contemporary social science, found in works as diverse as those of Cassirer, Lewin, Elias, Sapir, Jakobson, Dumézil, or Levi-Strauss (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014). It should also be noted that the authors present in this volume all respect this relational imperative, unlike many other researchers who use Bourdieu less stringently, as has been shown by Emirbayer and Johnson in their article devoted to Bourdieu and organisational analysis (2008) and Jost Sieweke on the dissemination of Bourdieusian thinking in the management field (2011).

In the case of management, Bourdieu therefore makes a number of contributions. As the chapters in this book have shown, he makes it possible to include managerial practices in a social field and to understand the strategies of social actors in the field concerned (acceptance, resistance), especially through power relations and symbolic domination, in particular gender, exerted within organisations. He forces us to revisit the concept of bounded rationality put forward by Herbert Simon, showing that there is another limit, registered as such—namely, that “the human mind is socially limited, socially structured” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014: 175). It also helps to remember the importance of history in an often short-sighted field: “social agents are the *product of history*, the history of the entire social space and

accumulated experience in the course of a path determined in the relevant field” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014: 186). He also offers a critique of economics and the concept of interest, which is based on his anthropological and historical knowledge: “Far from being an anthropological invariant, he writes that interest is an *historic arbitrary*, a historical construction that can not be known through historical analysis, *ex post*, through empirical observation, not derived *a priori* from a fictional design and very ethnocentric course of ‘Man’” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014: 164). Here he joined the seminal work of Marcel Mauss and Karl Polanyi, those of contemporary economic anthropology (Marshall Sahlins, Maurice Godelier), or still those francophone colleagues grouped around the magazine of Mauss since 1980, whose object is to defend an anti-utilitarian anthropology (Caillé, 2009). He also emphasises the importance of the body, the habitus of being socially incorporated. Finally, he helps to fight against what he calls the doxa—namely, “the unquestioned acceptance of the world lived everyday” (117)—which plays an indispensable role in the acceptance of social dominance.

As we just mentioned briefly, if Pierre Bourdieu provides a conceptual range, now well known and mobilised here by various contributors, a range that renews social analysis, he also defends the use of singular works. As he writes, “The ‘theories’ are research programs that do not call for ‘theoretical debate’, but a practical implementation susceptible to their refute and generalization, or better, of specifying and differentiating their claim to generality. Husserl taught that we must immerse ourselves in the particular to discover the invariant . . . A well-built particular case ceases to be a particular case” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014: 121).

The work of Bourdieu not only opens theoretical horizons but also offers a certain epistemological interest through this notion of permanent reflexivity that is at the heart of his work, if not its permanent epistemic concern; fundamentally anti-narcissistic (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014), this reflexive process addresses both how the researcher builds his or her research and analyses the data, and the place that the researcher occupies in the field concerned. As he wrote it, “*Reflexivity is a tool intended to produce more science and not to reduce the scope or destroy the ability of science. It is not intended to discourage scientific ambition but to make it more realistic. In contributing to the progress of science and, thus, to the progress of knowledge of the social world, reflexivity, makes possible a more responsible political action both in science and in politics. Bachelard said that ‘there is only science of what is hidden’ (1938)*” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014: 251). From this point of view, his reflection on language is particularly illuminating of the social games that accompany the expression of the word of each one, reminding us at the same time that “*linguistic relations are always symbolic power relations*” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014: 193).

His work also has a practical interest. As he writes, “As long as sociology remains at a very abstract and formal level, it is not used much. But when it comes down to the ordinary details of real life, it is a tool that

people can apply to themselves for quasi clinical purposes. Sociology gives us a small chance to understand the game we play and to reduce the influence of the forces of the field in which we operate as that of the embedded social forces that operate within us” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014: 255). In other words, sociology, by revealing the logic in which social actors involved, allows them, including us, to be more aware, more reflexive, and therefore more able to see the freedom of movement that exists in order to arrive at a political and ethical project that is liberating. This he expressed in a brief formula recalled by Wacquant: “Escape your structures” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014: 339).

Bourdieu’s work refers finally to an ethical politic. Wacquant has successfully summed up in his introduction to the new French edition of their meetings as follows: “The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu can also be read as political in the sense that it gives to this term: a collective effort to transform the principles of vision and division by which we construct the social world and on which we can hope to reshape the world in the sense of reason and justice” (Wacquant, 2014: 100). In other words, between an untraceable revolution and the maintenance of an established social order, Bourdieu advocates for a reasoned utopia.

As this work reveals interest in the work of Bourdieu for management researchers and organisational studies, it also illuminates one of the challenges of our scientific field—namely, the role of language and translation in its diffusion (Wacquant, 1993, 2013; Chanlat, 2014). As shown by numerous studies, translation, if it is necessary for the distribution of a work, is not completely sufficient. It is also necessary that the ideas indeed have a resonance in the other linguistic universe (Chanlat, 2014). Of this, Bourdieu was well aware. He has shown that one of the barriers to the diffusion of foreign works in a scientific field and given linguistic resides in the fact that they are interpreted in the light of national schemas of understanding that remain unconscious most of the time to translators (2002).

Bourdieu has indeed experienced a differentiated reception (Wacquant, 1993; Sieweke, 2011). While many researchers in organisational studies seem interested in his work today, it must be remembered that this is not new, since the early work of Di Maggio and Powell. Indeed, scholars had already drawn on Bourdieu’s work without always having give him thereafter the place which he deserved. We see at work, again, the logic of field, well identified by Bourdieu, where American work has overshadowed other work from different linguistic horizons, translation errors, or resonance in the American field (Chanlat, 2014), a phenomenon that can be also be observed in English works from Europe (Battilana, Anteby, and Sengul, 2010; Grey, 2010; Meyer and Boxenbaum, 2010) or elsewhere (Clegg, Ibarra Colado, and Bueno, 1999; Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Chanlat, 2014). We must therefore pay homage to authors who have led this work, and each of the contributors, for having played the role of frontier runners, essential to the intellectual dialogue between fields.

In this respect, it is interesting to note, for a French-language researcher, that almost all of the authors of this book refer to the English editions of Bourdieu; we can see the power of translation, without which the thinking of Bourdieu would not have known such distribution in the field of English language. This confirms once again that the international language is translation, and in particular that of Europe, as was so well defended by Umberto Eco (2007). Many other interesting works receive multiple translations, as Bourdieu himself shortly predicted before his death (2001).

In conclusion, I would like to stress again with what great interest I read this book and saw how each contributor complied with both the spirit and letter of the work of Pierre Bourdieu. I have only one wish today: that all potential readers, whether students or faculty members in organisational studies and management, interested in critical thinking and the work of Pierre Bourdieu, can read it.

Regarding the major socio-economic challenges that we face today, reading this book will not only enable future readers to participate in this social reflexivity in our field, as defended by Pierre Bourdieu, but also to pay tribute to the one of the most important body of sociological works of the second half of the 20th century, whose wealth is a constant source of inspiration for many social scientists in the world.

As francophone researchers, therefore, we cannot but welcome such a publication in English. This is indeed the surest way to maintain rich conversations between the different traditions in which we live today, both in the world of social sciences and in the world of organisational studies and management, and to contribute, as Bourdieu tried to do it, to remodelling the world in the direction of both reason and justice.

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NOTE

- * We would like to thank Tarani Merriweather Woodson for her translation of this foreword from the French.

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Lucy Taksa has been a professor of management and the head of the Department of Marketing and Management at Macquarie University since 2009, after 18 years at the University of NSW. She has undertaken research and published on: the impact of scientific management on the Workers Educational Association, technical, management, and business education and employability; migrant employment, Australian multiculturalism, and diversity management; the impact of gender culture on women's career trajectories; the history of safety management and industrial nursing; and

misbehaviour and nicknaming at work. She is currently working on a number of projects focused on identity: one with Associate Professors Ellie Vasta and Fei Guo, funded by the Australian Research Council, entitled 'Affinities in Multicultural Australia', and another with Professors John Boyages, Paul Gollan, and Dr Senia Kalfa (CI), funded by industry partners and Macquarie University, entitled 'Exploring the Social and Economic Impact of Living with Lymphoedema'. She is a member of the Australian Research Council College of Experts, an associate editor of the *European Management Review*, and the economic and labour relations review area editor for *Gender*. Previously she was a member of the Equal Opportunity Division of the NSW Administrative Decisions Tribunal (1996–2007, 2003–2007) and chair of the board of New South Wales State Archives (2007–2012).

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