

Entrevista com Johannes Hjelldreke

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Johannes Hjelldreke é professor de Sociologia na Universidade de Bergen. Seus trabalhos enfocam memória coletiva, classes sociais, elites, mobilidade social, epistemologia, ética na pesquisa e análise geométrica de dados. Suas publicações mais recentes incluem, entre outras, *Multiple correspondence analysis for the social science* (Routledge, 2018) e *New directions in elite studies*, em coautoria com Olav Korsnes, Johan Heilbron, Felix Bühlmann e Mike Savage (Routledge, 2018). Mais informações podem ser consultadas em: <https://www.uib.no/en/persons/Johs..Hjelldreke>.

You have extensively used MCA in your work. In fact, you may have contributed to the fact that recently more and more researchers inspired by Bourdieu have paid closer attention to MCA. However, it is probable that even nowadays Bourdieu's concepts and theory are much better known than his methods. Could you please explain how you see the relation between Bourdieu's theory and his use of MCA?

First of all: if any of my texts have made others become interested in MCA, I'm really happy. When I started reading Bourdieu's work almost 35 years ago, there

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were hardly any sociologists outside of France who knew MCA. I hope that situation has changed. But you are right: Bourdieu's concepts and theory are still far better known than his preferred statistical methods. To me, there is a close relation between his theory of fields and MCA. First, if the object is constructed correctly, MCA makes it possible to uncover the capital structures in a given space or a potential field. The relational interpretation of the results is also compatible with Bourdieu's methodological relationalism. And by the exploration of the associations between active and supplementary variables, one can also analyze the relations between the structures in the social space, the structures in a given field and the structures in the space of position takings. Furthermore, with the integration of MCA and variance analysis, pioneered by Brigitte Le Roux and the late Henry Rouanet (2010), the internal oppositions in a given group or a given field position can be examined in very detailed ways. With the risk of overdoing it, one might even claim that it also permits an analysis of the "*habitus clivé*" – hypothesis that other methods cannot, or at least not as easily, do. To me, MCA shows clearly why statistics should not be "the science of averages", but rather "the science of variation", as the difference between the Gaussian and the Galtonian view on statistics has been described.

Cultural capital is one of the most original concepts in Bourdieu's work. Recent studies have employed the notion of "emergent cultural capital" to address the fact that culture operates as some sort of capital but in a different way than in the past. There is also a great deal of evidence showing that tastes and lifestyles are shaped by social class. Less clear though is whether these practices and tastes are in fact some sort of power for these classes. Therefore, in terms of methodological tools, how can we capture practices and tastes that are not only forms of identification but also sources of power for social classes? In other words, how can we operationalize culture as distinction?

This is a question that in my opinion not primarily has to do with methods per se, as some recent trends in causal analysis might lead one to think, but rather with demonstrating and corroborating how cultural capital, like other forms of capital, has had, and still has, an inherent capacity to generate a "surplus value" or a profit for the holders, profits that those without the given type of cultural capital do not have. Whether or not, or to what degree, culture also is distinction, will probably vary between societies and/or over time. Bourdieu was well aware of this in his discussions of the homology thesis, when he explicitly warned against substantialist readings of his work. And as goes without saying, what counts as cultural capital in Brazil and in Norway might very well be very different, as will also the returns on the capital. So might the centrality of, and the return of other forms of capital, e.g., economic,

social, political and military capital, in the two social spaces. If this isn't reflected in the construction of the research object, e.g., the Brazilian or the Norwegian field of power, one risks in my view of doing a preconstruction of the research object. Simply to copy what Bourdieu did, would in my opinion be to look for France in Norway or for France in Brazil. The best way to avoid that, and at the same time to analyze whether or not specific types of capital also are sources of power, is to do a historically informed analysis of how, and by what means, these capital indicators are, and over time, linked to other forms of inequality in a given society. Are they linked to processes of social closure? To processes of social exclusion? To various forms of power? I'm afraid it's a Sisyphus task.

Much has been said about the conditions to operate Bourdieu's contribution in countries that are not France. Bourdieu himself addressed this question. You used Bourdieu's apparatus in Norway. Which are the precautions one should have to use Bourdieu's theoretical and analytical tools in different countries and social conditions? Which differences between Bourdieu's findings and yours are the most remarkable?

As I mentioned above, simply to copy what Bourdieu did in, for instance, "Distinction" would in my view be to do a preconstruction of the research object. As with any theory, one must separate between empirical and theoretical generalizations: this is also the case when one seeks to apply Bourdieu's theory of fields. And to quote the late Henry Rouanet: "...it is not enough to do a correspondence analysis to do what Bourdieu did in 'Distinction'". In the Norwegian case, the importance of political capital, also as a way to get access to the field of power, is in my view an interesting result. It is also a result that highlights the centrality of what is called tripartite system of industrial relations, with a tight collaboration between the labor unions, the managerial associations and the Norwegian state. This particular system, which has been in place for decades, is probably unique to Norway. Not to take it into consideration when constructing the Norwegian field of power would be a serious mistake. But nothing similar exists in France. Also, for this reason, it would be equally wrong to "look for Norway in France".

You argued above that "whether or not, or to what degree, culture also is distinction, will probably vary between societies and/or over time". What do you think are the main empirical results concerning "culture as distinction" in recent sociological research? In other words, what are the most pertinent results, in your opinion, regarding the operation of culture as a specific capital in contemporary societies?

In my view, two of the most important recent approaches are those of Mike Savage and Philippe Coulangeon. About ten years ago, Mike introduced the term “emerging cultural capital” to grasp the changing cultural capital in the British society, and how the accessibility was structured along class lines. Legitimate culture is still very much legitimate. But emerging forms of cultural capital further complicates the cultural capital hierarchies. To grasp these complexities and their consequences is an important task. For reasons mentioned above, to copy Mike’s indicators is probably not a good idea. But to try to develop adequate indicators on the emerging forms of cultural capital in a given society might also add an important temporal dimension to the analyses.

And Philippe Coulangeon’s recent book *Culture de masse et société de classe* (2021) shows clearly that even though the cultural oppositions found in the 1960s seem to have been replaced by an opposition between openness and closure towards cultural diversity, cultural class divisions are still “alive and kicking”. Not only is openness versus closure to cultural diversity structured along class lines. Cultural eclecticism can also be a way of maintaining social distance: while the upper classes might exhibit increasing interest in select working-class cultural repertoires, Coulangeon argues, the working classes display “cultural insularity”. In short: lifestyles and dispositions may have changed, but they are still classed, both in terms of their social structuring and in terms of their consequences in social life. And if I may add to this: upper class “cosmopolitanism”, a phenomenon that some authors have linked to globalization, is nothing new. As early as in 1938, Maurice Halbwachs wrote about this in his eminent book *Esquisse d’une psychologie des classes sociales*. It is still worth reading!

One of the main challenges for Bourdieusian research in the 21st century is coming to terms with the new speed of communication due to the internet, which arguably makes symbolic capital much more volatile in certain fields, and also creates new avenues for the accumulation and conversion of cultural capital. How do you picture a Bourdieusian research project dealing with such a scenario, both in methodological and theoretical terms?

The sociology of the internet is definitely outside of my field of expertise. But based on analyses of Norwegian data on cultural practices and preferences, it seems clear that because of the internet, generational differences are more present than before. Whether or not capital conversion has become easier, it is of course an empirical question. Any analysis of cultural capital and its conversion to other forms of capital must take these aspects into consideration. And in the artistic field, not to include

new forms of art in the construction of the field, like digital art, would probably be a serious mistake. The same goes for the new markets for selling art, like NFT-art. Whether or not this results in new structural oppositions is not given. It might simply be that the existing oppositions become stronger.

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