

## Introduction to IJURR Intervention (2): 'Bourdieu comes to town'.

**Mike Savage**

I would like to thank Liza Weinstein for her invitation for me to write a brief introduction to the second selection of papers which are part of the 'Bourdieu Comes to Town' symposium. My comments can be brief as Loic Wacquant (2018) has clearly laid out the reasons leading to him and myself running the symposium at University of York, which was the platform for this intervention. I will only add that these two days in May 2012 were a wonderful experience. There was an exciting crystallisation of papers from all around the globe, of course enriched by Loic's own irrepressible enthusiasm and vitality. I look back to that workshop with a degree of nostalgia. It was the last workshop I co-ordinated which can be considered a direct outgrowth of the intellectual energy generated by the remarkable Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC): an initiative I had directed from 2005 to 2010 when I worked at the University of Manchester. CRESC was an astonishingly fertile centre, bringing about a genuine cross fertilisation of insights from across the social sciences. While funding ended in 2012, its legacy shaping debates about financialisation, the 'social life of methods', the remaking of cultural capital, and the revitalisation of social class have proved formative. One of the key features of CRESC, also very evident in the York workshop, and which I want salute, was the commitment to encouraging engagement between early career researchers and doctoral students alongside established academics. The York speakers included a number of scholars who have established major reputations since 2012 – including Sonia Bookman, Michaela Benson, Lisa McKenzie, Insa Koch, Luna Glucksberg, Michael McQuarrie and Jorn Ljunggren, to name only a few. It is interesting for me to reflect that no less than three of these (Insa, Luna and Michael) are now my colleagues at the LSE, where Lisa also spent four years. Finally, I would also like to pay tribute to Josine Opmeer, under whose consummate administrative and managerial skills CRESC thrived so wonderfully.

Having made my sentimental reflections, I now want to add a few words about the significance of this collection of articles, which showcase how Bourdieusian insights can infuse a re-invigorated urban studies. I will make no attempt to provide the kind of systematic overview which Loic (Wacquant 2018) offers and which all the readers of this collection should consult. Loic emphasises in his overview that these four articles should be read alongside the previous collection and puts them in dialogue with the first group, noting that 'A second batch of essays to follow will migrate down the class and urban structure to offer a complementary microscopic view from below, relying on ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews to take the reader deep into the cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, religious, criminal and political fabric of ordinary existence' (Wacquant 2018: 92).

Given that Loic has done the conceptual heavy lifting, and as a means of emphasising the importance of the current of research represented both in the papers here, alongside those published in the first selection in 2018, I will just spend a few words to reflect on the strategic take up of Bourdieu in the social sciences in general, and urban studies in particular. One of my major concerns in organising the York workshop was to broaden out the debate on Bourdieu's significance away from the focus on cultural capital and class where the previous decade had seen such a concentration of energy, including my own (see notably the major project on 'Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion' by Bennett et. Al. 2009). The elaboration of what has sometimes been called 'cultural class analysis' represented an effort to recharge class studies in less economic terms than had previously prevailed. Although, as is to be expected, views differ about the intellectual merits of

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3 this turn (see for instance Atkinson 2015), this current did play a major role in revitalising the study  
4 of class. However, there is far more to the significance of Bourdieusian thinking than the specific  
5 issue of class, and it is the broader agenda which our workshop tried to bring to the fore with  
6 respect to urban research.  
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9 However, we can also see a trend within urban research for Bourdieu's contribution to be winnowed  
10 down into overly specific conceptual frames which can also be restrictive. Indeed, both Loic and  
11 myself carry some responsibility here. In my case, the concept of 'elective belonging', which I  
12 developed with Gaynor Bagnall and Brian Longhurst, has attracted interest in renewing concerns  
13 with the nature of residential attachment and local identities within contemporary neo-liberal  
14 capitalism (see e.g. Andreotti et al 2013; Tomaney 2015; Savage 2010; Jeffrey 2018; Paton 2016;  
15 Paton et al 2017; Watt 2009; 2010). As we explained at the time (Savage et al 2005), we used  
16 Bourdieusian tools to fashion the concept of elective belonging to make sense of the way that a  
17 particular group of northern English middle class residents came to passionately identify with their  
18 chosen areas of residence. However, this concept was at best a hypothesis, drawn from a particular  
19 case study, rather than a general statement about the nature of contemporary neo-liberal urban  
20 belonging. As with the issue of class, there is a danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.  
21 Scholars who are critical of the concept of elective belonging may thereby come to be critical of  
22 Bourdieu's wider relevance – but there is no warrant for drawing this second inference from the first  
23 reflection.  
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28 A related example arises in Loic's own championing of 'territorial stigmatisation' as a means of  
29 making sense of urban marginality. This concept has also come to have considerable provenance  
30 (e.g. Hancock and Mooney 2013; Slater and Hannigan 2017). One of its appeals has been the  
31 relationship it offers to the recent exciting elaboration of concepts of stigmatisation, notably in the  
32 work of Imogen Tyler (e.g. Tyler 2018; Tyler and Slater 2018). Nonetheless, this concept is only one  
33 way of rendering urban marginality, and indeed this is a point which several of the papers in this  
34 collection emphasise. Thus Jensen et. al. emphasise how urban inequality in Aalborg, Denmark, does  
35 not see marked stigmatisation towards residents of the poorer areas. '(W)e have shown that the  
36 territorial stigmatization of the area we have studied is resisted and contested by the inhabitants,  
37 and therefore only has a limited effect as symbolic violence on the residents'. Auyero, in his account  
38 of marginality in Argentine shanty towns also offers a perspective emphasising the organisation of  
39 time. 'Waiting, writes Pierre Bourdieu in *Pascalian Meditations*, is one of the ways of experiencing  
40 the effects of power. "Making people wait [...] delaying without destroying hope [...] adjourning  
41 without totally disappointing" are, according to Bourdieu (2000: 227), integral parts of the working  
42 of domination'  
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47 In short, we need to broaden out our understanding of Bourdieu's relevance away from the specific  
48 contested uses of particular concepts (such as elective belonging or territorial stigmatisation) which  
49 may have been inspired by his work, but far from exhaust its potential. In excavating this wider  
50 deployment of Bourdieu's thinking, I would like to pull out four key strengths which I want to bring  
51 out, which are apparent both in the four papers here as well as those in the first batch of papers.  
52 The first of these is the potential to think across different sites. In the context of the debate inspired  
53 by post-colonial scholarship about the need to decentre the global north and recognise the  
54 significance of urbanisation in Asia, Africa and South America, it is striking to note the geographical  
55 diversity of the contributions which to some extent correct a certain Eurocentrism in the first batch  
56 of articles. This makes it even more important that these papers are considered alongside the earlier  
57 batch.  
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3 Secondly, I want to highlight the concern to link the macro with micro dimensions of urban life, to  
4 engage the political economy of cities with their 'lived experience'. This involves resisting tendencies  
5 to see urban fortunes as the product of external wider forces over which residents have no control.  
6 A fascinating example of this is in Poupeau's account of the appeal of high rise elite housing projects.  
7 He resists the idea that these can simply be attributed to global circulation flows: 'the analysis of the  
8 *chalets* shows that the appropriation of foreign Western "elements" enters into the production of  
9 original symbolic forms that cannot be reduced either to the international circulation of global  
10 architecture nor to the urban persistence of an ethnic identity generated in rural communities'. We  
11 see this same argument in Tugal's account of Istanbul which emphasises the limits of the  
12 modernising and nationalising frame of the cities developers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
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16 Thirdly, is the emphasis on how the pragmatics of everyday life need to be rendered historically and  
17 politically. There has been a considerable revival of pragmatist currents in much sociology, for  
18 instance in the deployment of 'practice theory' and whilst these are valuable statements of the need  
19 for social analysis to recognise the mundane practicalities of everyday relations, they have been  
20 accused of leading to an a-political orientation which lacks an awareness of the contested stakes  
21 evident in the daily organisation of urban life. Bourdieu is thus a valuable theoretical resource for  
22 embedding the necessary awareness of phenomenological issues into a political analysis. Here,  
23 Tugal's argument about the need to combine a Gramscian with a Bourdieusian perspective is  
24 important.  
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27 Finally, and reaching back to the first set of papers, I would emphasise the power of thinking about  
28 cities in terms of the organisation and accumulation of capital. This is an issue which Jensen et al  
29 bring directly out in their account of Aalborg, but is also evident in the other papers. This focus on  
30 capital allows us to understand how capital does not operate as some kind of abstract global force  
31 but as rooted in specific locations, of which cities are of paramount importance. This is a point which  
32 I have recently elaborated (Savage 2017) as offering an alternative frame for urban analysis than the  
33 modernist sensibility regarding contingency and transience which continues to dominate  
34 considerable amounts of urban scholarship.  
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38 In closing these brief remarks, I would like to thank the support of the *International Journal of Urban*  
39 *and Regional Research* for publishing these papers and hope that they provoke further debate and  
40 reflection.  
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