Outlines of a Theory of Plural Habitus: Bourdieu Revisited

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“Our languages are constructed in such a way that we can often only express constant movement or constant change in ways which imply that it has the character of an isolated object at rest, and then, almost as an afterthought, adding a verb which expresses the fact that the thing with this character is now changing. For example, standing by a river we see the perpetual flowing of the water. But to grasp it conceptually, and communicate it to others, we do not think and say, “Look at the perpetual flowing of the water”, we say, “Look how fast the river is flowing.” We say, “The wind is blowing”, as if the wind were actually a thing at rest which, at a given point of time, begins to move and blow. We speak as if the wind were separate from its blowing, as if a wind could exist which did not blow”.

(Norbert Elias 1978, 111–112)

Introduction

In November 1983, as a newly graduated sociologist, I spent one month in France. At the time, it was not easy to travel to the so-called "Western" countries from communist Hungary, as Hungarian citizens could make such a visit them every three years only – after the Interior Ministry had given permission to do so (which sometimes took months). My French orientation began at the age of 14 when I was accepted to a high school in downtown Budapest where French taught as a foreign language. This time, however, my journey was motivated not only by desire of experiencing French culture first hand, but also by a professional project. My backpack contained a translation of my university dissertation, which I deposited with Bourdieu's secretary the day after I arrived in Paris, asking her to forward it to him. The title of the work was "The Structure and Function of the Field of Pop Music". This was an essay on the Hungarian pop-rock music scene of the 1970s and 1980s with a focus on the Bourdieusian field concept – to reveal, first of all, how the constitution of the "field" (including its political control) contributed to the legitimization of the regime.

There were only three days left from my 30-day visit when the secretary called me to say that Monsieur Bourdieu was expecting me the next day. (At that time, if a Hungarian citizen returning from a Western country exceeded the visa by even one day, s/he could expect his or her passport to be revoked for an indefinite time.) Bourdieu was extremely kind, interested, empathetic, even enthusiastic; he told me that my thesis was very original and a book on the subject would make me known internationally. He also proposed to start my doctoral studies at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* under his tutelage. In retrospect, I am not sure that my dissertation, translated into a less than nuanced French, would have been that great. My warm reception was partly due to the fact that I came from a Soviet Bloc country and that my text was critical of the communist social order. My subject was rather unique and my professional background may have also played a role, since few studies had been written by that time that applied Bourdieu's conceptual framework to issues related to music.

I then spent two academic years under Bourdieu's supervision. The world opened up to me: Instead of the narrow horizon of a semi-peripheral dictatorship, I had the opportunity to see the world from the vibrant perspective of a former colonial great power. At the same time, identifying with the position of the oppressed, I also developed a particular receptivity to the Algerian, Vietnamese or Guadeloupean point of view. I was fascinated to read and listen to stories of skeletons falling out of the cupboard of French national memory, an interest connected with the self-reflexive spirit of Bourdieu and his surroundings. Meanwhile, I lapped up the unparalleled abundance of culture, science and everyday life, from Peter Brook's *Bouffe du Nord* Theatre and the art cinemas in the Latin Quarter to visceral life experiences. I also couldn't get enough of the opportunity to see in person such scholars and artists as Jürgen Habermas, Aaron Cicourel (one of the rare Americans sociologists close to Bourdieu), Tadeusz Kantor or György Ligeti.

But the greatest experience for me was Pierre Bourdieu's charisma: In his seminars and in the discussions at his *Centre de sociologie européenne*, I had the impression of being close to a genius. And this impression was shared by many around me. Moreover, it was thanks to his recommendation that I started my academic career in Hungary at the Karl Marx University of Economic Sciences in 1985. (I taught at this university and its successor institutions for 35 years. Last year, I left my position as professor at the Institute of Sociology and head of the Doctoral School of Social Communication in protest against the reorganisation of the university and the placement of oligarchs loyal to the government in its leading managerial positions.) In the 1980s and 90s, I

attended a few conferences thanks to his recommendation, co-authored, with Victor Karády, a paper on the history of Hungarian football in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* (the sociological journal founded, directed and edited by Bourdieu), and conducted an interview with him, which appeared in the Hungarian sociological journal *Replika* I had founded and edited.

I would describe my relation to him as complex and ambivalent: I have been hugely influenced by his work and his conceptual framework throughout my career – particularly the notion of habitus, and his research on education and symbolic distinctions. Nevertheless, I have always had a kind of Oedipal unease about him – although I had to realise that even in my symbolic struggle against him, I used his terminology. I also realised that a significant number of French sociologists were becoming increasingly critical of him and his school of sociology. Although when someone criticised him, I felt as if the attack was directed at me, and I *instinctively* tried to defend him. This was often not difficult, as the accusations were sometimes quite absurd (such as the book written on Bourdieu's "sociological terrorism"). But I had to admit that certain allegations (both about his academic work and his personal and managerial decisions) were not unfounded. (For a more detailed discussion of this subject, I recommend Natalie Heinich's excellent book (Heinich 2007), which gives insights into Bourdieu's strategies and trajectory.) Nevertheless, my encounter with Bourdieu represented a decisive turning point in my life since earlier I was not at all sure to start an academic career, even though I had a degree in sociology.

To explain why, I have to step back in time a few decades.

At the age of six, after a series of tough entrance exams, I was accepted to one of the most prestigious music primary schools in Budapest (at a five-minute walk from our flat), where I received a very intensive musical education. The high status of the school is evidenced by the fact that some of its alumni became internationally renowned musicians. For eight years, I had eight music classes per week, as well as two two-hours long choral rehearsals and two piano classes. All this was combined with optional "music listening" occasions in the last two years, where we listened to and analysed music ranging from Monteverdi to Krzysztof Penderecki. I also performed regularly with the school choir, where I sang several solos. During these eight years, I did not prepare as much for all the other subjects combined as I did for the music classes. As such, it was evident both to my teachers and my family that I would continue my studies in music.

But at the age of 14, out of adolescent defiance, I decided not to apply to the élite Budapest music high school of music where I would have had a good chance of being accepted, irrevocably setting the course of my future career. Nevertheless, I formed a rock band with my former classmates and, later, between the ages of 18 and 26, attended a teacher training college, graduating with a degree in musical education, as well as completing three years of study in the jazz department of the Budapest Conservatory. During these years, I earned my living as a rock musician (I was a singer and played the piano), and started my studies in sociology in parallel with my musical activities. In addition, from the age of 12, I was very active in sports, too, first as a footballer, before switching to athletics at the age of 14. At 16, I was selected for the national team of my age group as a short-distance runner. Although a serious illness ended my career as an athlete (meningitis left me unable to match my previous results), my drive for sports has remained unchanged to this day – whether in solitary endeavours (like running and kayaking) or team sports (like football).

So, what do these private biographical contingencies have to do with the subject of this book? The answer is "a lot", and in at least three different respects.

First, as a social scientist and gender scholar familiar with Standpoint Theory, I am convinced that it is not possible to talk about everything out of nowhere. Epistemologically speaking, only situated

knowledge and partial perspectives can guarantee scientific objectivity – as Donna Haraway (1988) rightly claims in her often-quoted brilliant essay. Consequently, I believe it important to elucidate my knowledge position at the beginning, with particular reference to my geopolitical professional embeddedness and relationship with Bourdieu. Second, following the Bourdieusian requirement for socio-analysis and self-reflection, I also wanted to make it clear that my career was conditioned by activities I carried out, intensively, before becoming a sociologist. It is no coincidence that in the first two decades of my career as a sociologist I was mainly concerned with music and sport, although I always tried to distance myself from the labels "sociologist of music" or "sociologist of sport", because, again as a disciple of Bourdieu, I thought I was a "general" sociologist who was just concerned with music or sport. In the same way, the fact that I turned to studies of men and masculinities cannot be dissociated from my life history, since I recognised that taking myself as a research subject would equip me with an almost inexhaustible experience in the social construction of masculinity. As a result, I found a new field of study in which I could move safely with the taken-for-granted knowledge and dispositions I had inherited and invested with – at least if my self-analysis has been properly directed.

Third, and maybe most importantly, over the last decade, I have become increasingly aware that in many ways I was and still am a different person as a musician and sportsman than as a university lecturer and academic; just as I had to realise that, even decades later, I can still tune instantaneously into the wavelength of musicians or athletes – i.e. I feel "at home" in their company, so much so that it practically never occurs to them that I'm supposed to be an academic. Correspondingly, my incorporated dispositional patterns (breathing techniques, stepping, footwork, hand positioning, improvisational automatisms both on the pitch and while playing music, etc.) can be re-activated easily.

These insights were greatly strengthened by Bourdieu's posthumous book (Bourdieu 2004), in which he carried out a socio-analysis of himself, and introduced the concept of "cleft habitus". I bought the book the day after its publication, read it in a few hours, and then had an epiphany. It became clear to me that all the activities and events of my life could be interpreted as practices structured by my social embeddedness and mediated by my dispositions. At the same time, I felt (actually, I know this for certain) that, in contrast to the cleft habitus described by Bourdieu, my dispositions were peacefully coexisting, even reinforcing each other. The best example is the role of the repetitive learning practice in the inculcation of my dispositions. By the age of eight, it became natural for me to practise the finger order of a *sonatina* until I could play it on the piano with my eyes closed. Like most pianists, I hated the Czerny etudes, but I had to play them so much that the technical elements they are intended to inculcate sooner or later became automatisms.

As an athlete, I was subjected to a similar disposition drill when I had to repeat, a thousand times, the exercises prescribed by my coaches, all of which served to perfect my technique and my sense of the game. These dispositional patterns were later easily *transferable* to new fields of practise – such as learning a new sport or foreign language, playing a new musical instrument, incorporating car-driving skills, or even internalising the aptitudes involved in academic work and teaching at a university. However, I should stress that none of the expectations of the school or the sports club to practice hard and persistently existed in my family. Without going into details, suffice it to say that my mother, who had me as an only child at the age of almost forty, not only loved me very much (it was mutual) but also pampered me, regarding talent and success as an inherited, God-given privilege that did not have to be earned. Therefore, my family did not expect much diligence and effort of me.

Consequently, I realised that I did not have a cleft habitus, but rather a plural habitus, given that I had acquired different dispositional patterns through different forms of activity that went perfectly

together. And, by continuing my socio-analysis, I have discovered other factors conditioning my dispositions. I would like to mention but the most crucial of these: my family embeddedness, namely the different dispositions in my own nuclear family that I had inherited from my paternal and maternal ancestors. Although, statistically speaking, when I was born in the 1950s, both my parents belonged to the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie, as Roman Catholic office clerks with a high school diploma living in the centre of Budapest, this position was the product of upward social mobility for my father and downward mobility for my mother.

My father was the seventh child of a village teacher at the lower school level. They lived in modest conditions in the backward northern part of Hungary (even when I was a teenager, my grandparents' house had no running water, the toilet was a wooden shack at the end of the garden, and the stool was dug up with a shovel to fertilise the plants). My father enjoyed being outdoors, planting vegetables, engaging in bricolage, playing cards or doing crossword puzzles; he often took me to football matches or hiking at weekends. My mother grew up in Budapest as a well-off bourgeois girl, taught by nuns, taking dance and piano lessons and whistling popular opera and operetta arias by heart. Her father, my grandfather, was a civil servant in the right-wing regime of the interwar period, and his relatives included senior priests, military officers and aunts boasting noble ancestry. My mother, when she was forced to visit her father-in-law during Christmas, laughed at the "falsely chanting peasant women" at Holy Mass, and when the Lord's Prayer was recited in the local dialect, she found it very funny. She was the only one of her friends who could take her son to the opera. And even at the age of 12, during the interval between the acts of *La traviata*, I could tell her friends stories about Italian operas that left them speechless. Needless to say, my mother was beaming with happiness.

This different parental embeddedness also manifested itself in the attitude towards the body and personal hygiene. Whereas my mother dressed neatly, bathed daily and performed regular beauty treatments, my father and his environment had a very different attitude to this type of activities. I remember my shock when I witnessed (I must have been about ten) my father's sister, who lived with their elderly parents, emerging from the outhouse without washing her hands, and then going into the kitchen to start peeling potatoes (I never told my mother about this). And while my mother was shy and prudish, felt uncomfortable in a bathing suit and didn't use bad language, my father smoked cigarettes, told sexist jokes, swore with pleasure and was not at all averse to getting naked and producing body sounds.

The main point is that I identified with both milieus without any problems: When I stayed in the village during school holidays (not less than two or three months a year), I adapted perfectly to the local environment. We ran around barefoot (my feet got stiff by the end of each summer), played football, caught frogs and snakes, picked mushrooms, shot birds with slingshots and, like the young lads in Louis Pergaud's novel *La Guerre des boutons*, competed to see who could pee farther. I even mastered the village dialect, although my local friends told me not to speak like that because it *didn't suit me*. In the autumn, I was back in the city again, attending piano lessons and training sessions reliably, chatting good-naturedly with my mother's friends who came to our house every week, and correcting my mother when she sang certain arias inaccurately.

As I write this introduction, I have become aware that for the past forty years or so, my life has been structured, in roughly equal proportions, by essentially three milieus and three related dispositional patterns. In these settings, I have extended my parental heritages. The primary milieu of my life, what I would call the "*high season*", revolves around a middle class existence in Budapest, including a complex pattern of academic activity, professional relationships, social life, civic activism and cultural consumption. This way of living is, evidently, an extension and continuation of the bourgeois

tradition represented by my maternal family. The "*low season*" meanwhile is spent in rural isolation, in close and intense contact with nature and a rural world. The scene of this way of life is placed now in my country house, near my father's home village, which I bought on my return from Paris in the mid-1980s, and where elderly people still speak the dialect I learned and loved as a child (and which I can still imitate almost perfectly to entertain my urban environment). It is an idyllic countryside of rivers, lakes, mountains and forests, where I can indulge (in) my physical and sporting needs – rowing, swimming, climbing, cycling, etc. (that is, the kinds of activities that urban people prefer to pursue in rural areas) – while writing my latest paper in the morning and evening. Needless to say, all this belongs to my father's legacy.

The "*voyage season*" refers to travels and trips abroad, and can be further divided into professional, cultural and adventure sub-dimensions. The first of these includes academic conferences and guest lectures; the second denotes cultural and intellectual consumption practices in Western cities; the third designates the search for natural thrills, from volcanoes to mangrove forests. Perhaps it is not an overstatement to interpret this third sub-dimension as a projection of both the high and low season milieus into a global context. And although my most deeply rooted dispositions are related to the high season, I have the impression that a transformation has recently started to take place in my life – not unrelated to age: The calm, quiet, natural world of the low season is thus becoming increasingly important for me.

This last comment also illustrates that my dispositions have been constantly rearranged, transformed and altered at different periods of my life, that is, my inherited dispositional arsenal is in constant flux. For example, I have realised that I had (and still have) an inclination to take unrealistically high risks. To use Bourdieu's language, the urges of my *libido dominandi*, the main structuring factor of masculine dispositions, may erupt to the surface. I have repeatedly found myself in life-threatening circumstances while practising extreme sports or being involved in unforeseen dangerous situations. (For example, in the Philippines, I learned the life lesson to always control my counter-violent urges, such as not pushing back the teenage kid who is trying to rob me because his brother will have a knife at my throat in a matter of seconds.) I also found that when I became a father, I started, almost automatically, to control my dangerous urges: I drove much more carefully and tried to avoid areas that were less safe, whether in the city or in mountains. However, once I was alone in the car again, I would take greater risks, as a test of strength and courage and for my amusement. But as my age has progressed, these urges have begun to recede.

In closing this introduction, two references are to be mentioned, without which this book would not have been written. The first one is Bourdieu's book (Bourdieu 1998) on masculine domination. I felt then, and still think, that the book's claims are not fully acceptable. Without summarising the points of my criticism (for that, see chapters 1 and 3.3), it must be stated that my critical reading of this book took me to the first draft of my theory of plural habitus. As an advocate of historical studies on men and masculinities, I am convinced that the opposite avails to be true of what Bourdieu described: Over the long history of masculine domination, the gap between genders has been diminished and plural dispositional layers, conditioned by changing structural constraints, have been built upon each other.

In closing this introduction, I would like to mention two references without which this book would not have been written. The first one is Bourdieu's book (Bourdieu 1998) on masculine domination. I felt then, and still think, that the book's claims are not acceptable. Without summarising the points of my criticism (for that, see chapters 1 and 3.3), I would simply like to say that my remarks on this book were the first steps towards my theory of plural habitus. As an advocate of historical studies on men and masculinities, I am convinced that the opposite of what Bourdieu described is true: Over

the long history of masculine domination, the gap between genders has been diminished and plural dispositional layers, conditioned by changing structural constraints, have been built upon each other.

Second, my work has benefited greatly from the process sociology of Norbert Elias (the essence of which is reflected in the motto of the book). Elias taught me to see social relations as being in constant move and transformation. Based on his approach, habitus can not only be captured in tastes, aesthetic dispositions, bodily hexis and language use (as Bourdieu generally did), but also in the most intimate incorporated dimensions – such as sexuality and the satisfaction of bodily needs (all of which were outside Bourdieu' focus). I also owe to Elias the insight that in studying social relations, great importance should be attached to dispositional patterns inculcated over the long term. This perspective explains why the book's examples apply to both the past and the present.

In a word, the aim of this biographical sketch was to demonstrate that I am the walking incorporation of plural habitus. In turn, this book can thus be considered as my most personal.

IV. Summary

Chapter outlines

In this book, I have sought to outline a theory of plural habitus, based on the Bourdieusian theory of practice. I have accepted, despite my critical stance, several elements of Bourdieu's conceptual framework: a path that constitutes a prolongation proper of the one he had taken towards the end of his life has been adopted. In this critical reconstruction, I have relied, first of all, on Norbert Elias' process sociology. Decades before him, this great German sociologist applied the concept of habitus in the same sense as Bourdieu did. I also have drawn on Bernard Lahire's sociology at the level of the individual on the one hand and on contemporary social mobility research on the other. In the second part of the book, I have attempted to illustrate the genealogy and functioning of plural habitus in a number of examples. Due to the textual limitations, the purpose was to illustrate the logic of the argument and to highlight new research topics, rather than to provide a sophisticated account of historical reality.

I have accepted the Bourdieusian definition of habitus, namely, that this concept refers to non-conscious, non-reflected and non-intentional forms of social action. The term denotes a "system of durable and transposable dispositions which, integrating all past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions, and makes it possible to accomplish infinitely differentiated tasks, thanks to the analogical transfer of schemata acquired in prior practice". These dispositions are the outcomes of a decades-long cycle of incorporated routine movements and produce classifiable practises in an interactive manner through improvisations, i.e. they can be modelled on the metaphor of the sense of the game.

In the first chapter, Bourdieu's usage of the concept has been reviewed across his oeuvre. Through the examples of football and music, I have revealed that habitus is a manifestation of the practical sense, understood via the metaphor of the sense of the game. According to Bourdieu, patterns of the sense of the game generate "objectively homogenized" actions in all areas of social practice, and thus structure the various lifestyles. By introducing the concept of "conductorless orchestration", Bourdieu means that the practices of "the members of the same group or, in a differentiated society, the same class, are always more and better harmonized than the agents know or wish". In other words, the dispositions are homogeneous and usually fit harmoniously into the respective fields. One of his main propositions is that although social classes move in the same direction, dominant groups

can preserve their relative power position, thereby guaranteeing the unchangeability of the social structure – hence, the structure of the gap is maintained between the classes. This is the thesis of the translational reproduction of social structure.

To grasp the relations between social structures (institutions) and dispositions, Bourdieu applies four conceptual strategies. First, although he develops a theory of the transformation of social structure (this is the above-mentioned model of the "translational reproduction of structure"), he does not link it to the transformation of habitus but simply ignores this latter dimension. Second, he claims – in *Masculine Domination* – that while social structures change, dispositions remain – "astonishingly" – unchanged, and therefore the gap between social groups also remains unchanged. To illustrate this "permanence in change" thesis, he ignores and disregards social transformations and neglects crucial references. Correspondingly, when he writes about the "power of the structure", "constancy of habitus" or "permanence in and through change", he replaces class by gender and class habitus by gender(ed) habitus, i.e. he extends his paradigm about the displacement of the social structure to the displacement of the man/woman relationship.

His third conceptual strategy is based on the term hysteresis and the so-called Don Quixote effect. These categories refer to crises where patterns of normal functioning become dysfunctional because of a lack of consistency between the primary habitus, accumulated in the family, and the altered constraints and expectations during and after social transformations. The fourth strategy is to introduce new terms – such as primary, secondary and cleft habitus – to identify diverse dispositional patterns. Primary habitus is incorporated during early childhood, when the microcosm of the family inculcates the objectively orchestrated and taken-for-granted dispositions. Secondary habitus is accumulated partly by the specialised pedagogical labour of the school and partly by the different fields. The concept of cleft habitus denotes internally divided, fragmented and contradictory forms of habitus. With very few exceptions, Bourdieu wrote the works in which these diversified habitus concepts play a role either at the very beginning or the very end of his career.

In the second chapter, I have presented examples of research that have made important steps towards capturing the plural habitus. The first of these is social mobility research. The majority of these studies deals with the role of higher education in the process of social mobility – focussing, first of all, on the intra-generational mobility of students of working-class origin. The authors apply, mainly, the concept of "cleft habitus" as a master category, although the "cleft" adjective is sometimes replaced by other terms such as "fragmented", "compartmentalised", "chameleon", "divided" or "destabilised" forms of habitus. An interesting article by Friedman proposes the term "mobility trajectory" to refer to the range, speed, direction, durability and mutability of upward mobility. Some authors argue that the origins of cleft habitus are present even within the early experiences of working-class family life. The concepts of cleft habitus and hysteresis are also found in several articles in the field of migration studies. By using such terms as "transnational habitus" or "global habitus", these authors investigate the trajectories of different migrant categories, as well as the incorporation of specific forms of secondary habitus connected to the migration experience in transnational spaces. Some researchers claim that behavioural transformations in upward social mobility processes do not necessarily lead to the replacement of one habitus with another, but rather to a diversification of the dispositional repertoire.

Among the authors dealing with differentiated and changing habitus, Bernard Lahire's works stand out for their significance, ambition and scope. The main stake of his sociology is to discover and analyse the important nuances and fine-grained dimensions of individual dispositions. He suggests establishing a "sociology at the level of the individual" which descends to a lower level of observation, "the assessment of the singular as such", and studies the various socialisation processes

facing “the internal plurality of individuals”. He states that “the singular is necessarily plural in nature”, i.e. each actor can incorporate a multiplicity of schemes of action or habits, which are activated according to the situation. Thus, researchers have to take into account the multiple non-field contexts of socialisation: the family, school, employment, religion, sports, etc. He claims that “actors are *multi-socialized* and *multi-determined*, and that it is for this very reason that they are not in a position to ‘feel’ or have a practical intuition of the weight of these determinisms”. However, Lahire seems to underestimate the importance of those texts of Bourdieu in which the issues of hysteresis, the Don Quixote effect, primary and secondary dispositions or cleft habitus are scrutinised. He has come up neither with a model of social structure nor of social change.

In the third chapter, which is divided into five sub-chapters, the emergence and functioning of the plural habitus has been illustrated through historical examples. These examples serve two purposes. On the one hand, I have tried to give a sense of the logic of the argument and, on the other hand, I have selected examples that complement and question certain claims and analyses of Bourdieu and Elias. By starting from Bourdieu’s formulation that there is a principle of the transformation of habitus, the identification of this principle – or, rather, these principles, for there are several at work – has been attempted. The harmonious co-existence of dispositions and the small gap between primary and secondary (tertiary, etc.) habitus have not been focused upon, rather the gap between these patterns has been emphasized.

In the first sub-chapter (3.1), I have outlined the key elements of the sociology of Norbert Elias by underlining that, by using his process sociology, we can grasp many aspects of the social world that were ignored by Bourdieu, even though there is a family resemblance between the two authors. The main characteristic of Eliasian process sociology is that it seeks to grasp phenomena as they move and change; his concept of power refers to changing balances; his *homines aperti* model of societies represents a plurality of “figurations of interdependent individuals” (such as families, schools, towns, social strata, or states) where everyone is connected to everyone through “chains of interdependences”. It must be clear that Elias’ central focus has been on the study of long-term processes. As an example, the main theses of two of his books (Elias 1996, 2000) have been presented. The kernel of the argument of his opus magnum, *On the Process of Civilization*, is that when faced with external social pressures, people develop self-control mechanisms to suppress “uncivilised”, animal-like behavioural elements. These suppressions function as feelings of shame, confusion and embarrassment. In the long run, violence control has become the common denominator of the dispositional arsenal of European man and woman. In his book about the Germans (Elias 1996), he aims to explain “the emergence of Hitler’s civilized barbarism”. This book indicates that the civilising process is not a linear development but reversible, and that there are many de-civilising countervailing tendencies within it.

Sub-chapter 3.2 takes the form of a thought experiment. Elias’ magnum opus pays less attention to certain institutions, above all the church and the growth of cities. Thus, I attempted, ambitiously, to sketch out a possible big-picture narrative based on the Eliasian assumption that the lengthening of interdependency chains permeates different social spheres. I have started from the structuring function of the church, by emphasising the importance of expansive habitus (rather than violence control) during the formation of the Western habitus. This sub-chapter’s historical examples have sought to illustrate that expansive habitus generates forms of practice that expand not only in space but also in time. For example, even as early as the Middle Ages, not only the knights were always on the move, but the Church was also constantly expanding: The clerics wanted to control an ever-increasing part of society and enlarge the Church’s area of influence, both in a geographical and a social sense – as illustrated by the crusades and the militantly proselytising new religious orders.

In parallel, the urban milieu contributed to the emergence of arithmetic habitus, i.e. a special disposition that deepened and expanded the range of the world that could be understood by man. As a result of the systematic study of perspective and the increase in the spatial radius of activity of adventuresome men, the world expanded, became larger and more complex. Thanks to the development of astronomy and the transition from a geocentric worldview to a heliocentric one, the great discoveries and the spread of colonisation on a global level, journeys were becoming more frequent and longer and the units of measurement more detailed. These structural and dispositional transformations also changed the forms of warfare. As a result of the infantry and the artillery revolutions, military confrontations were transformed into warfare based on expansive offensive strategies. The target of violence was removed ever farther, as maps and models allowed for greater abstraction and the development of cartography promoted the increasing accuracy of strategic plans. Thus, the lengthening of interdependency chains encompassing large geographic and social units and the rise of expanding habitus entailed the expansion of the Western civilisation.

In sub-chapter 3.3, I have attempted a critical presentation of the main claims of Bourdieu's *Masculine Domination* (Bourdieu 2001) from the perspective of process sociology. The thesis of this book is that "the structure of the gaps is maintained" between men and women, and that "women have in common the fact that they are separated from men by a negative *symbolic* coefficient". According to Bourdieu, masculine domination was maintained by the family, church, state and school. This proposition can be challenged by pointing out that these institutions have not reproduced masculine domination but transformed the power balance between men and women. As a result, the gender(ed) dispositions have converged.

The historical perspective has shown that, by prohibiting polygamy and pacifying matrimonial relations, the Catholic Church had a huge impact on the emancipation of women. The significance of the intimate sphere was being upgraded from the 17th century onwards: The "birth of childhood" entailed the development of maternal and paternal activities requiring the internalisation of appropriate emotions, duties and goal-oriented educational tasks. In the long run, the goals of the first-wave feminist movement were realised: Whilst before the mid-19th century, schools were attended exclusively by men, and only daughters of the upper classes received a personalised private education, by the end of the 20th century, the proportion of boys and girls in schools corresponded to their actual social weight. As part of these social transformations (including the advent of ever new waves of feminism), a growing number of women gained legitimate control over their bodies. This not merely entailed the right to abortion, but also those of sexual satisfaction and political participation.

In sub-chapter 3.4, the importance of the life cycle in the emergence of plural habitus has been examined. I have pointed out that people are subject to recurring situational constraints that become structural constraints throughout the life cycle. A closed, static habitus hardly exist, since dispositions are constantly changing: People are being born, they go to school, graduate, marry, divorce, change their position in the labour market, move to a new location, grow old, fall ill (etc.), and then die at the end. These processes are mediated and separated by rites of passage (baptism, graduation, wedding, new employment, retirement, etc.), and are symbolised by consecrating documents (diplomas, passports, driving licences, medical diagnoses, residence cards, etc.). These documents can be obtained if certain conditions are met. Acquiring them is usually a matter of achievement: The expectations are formulated and controlled by socialising institutions (families, schools, churches, local governments, sports clubs, workplaces, etc.). Their components are based not only on cognitive knowledge but also on embodied skills and senses.

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu writes that "competing groups are separated by differences which are essentially located in the order of time". If we take this into account, the static distinctions between the dispositions of different social classes can be put into the context of a dynamic social structure evolving over time. If – in the spirit of process sociology – we see societies as being in permanent transformation, dispositions can serve as indicators of both intra- and inter-generational mobility processes. For example, craftsmen (or their offspring) can rise to the ranks of the "new petite bourgeoisie", for example by becoming office employees. Hence, at different periods of their life cycles, these upwardly mobile individuals may well incorporate new dispositional patterns. Correspondingly, it is possible that even in a stable nuclear family there are structuring factors – such as the different class positions, educational levels, occupations, or mother tongues (etc.) of the parents – that contribute to the emergence of plural habitus. In these cases, children are likely to incorporate plural dispositions, conditioned by the diverse social embeddedness of their parents.

In the last sub-chapter (3.5), I have dealt with the issue of habitus inculcation. First, the inculcating institutions have been identified. My thesis has been that the state, the family, the church, the army, the school, the market, one's social life, etc., all apply strategies for inculcating habitus. During this process, the aim is not only to incorporate cognitive knowledge but also drives and inclinations. I have distinguished three types of habitus inculcation: coercion, reinforcement and enticement. The strategy of coercion is practised, primarily, by the state and the church. The state, by relying on public law and coercive bodies (such as the military or the police), holds the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force against residents of its territory. Throughout history, states have made huge efforts to regulate as many dimensions of social existence as possible through strict coercive and prohibitive measures. Such inculcation of habitus was also effectively carried out by the Christian Churches. The monks' lives followed the Rule of St Benedict of Nursia (480-550), written as a guide to regulate the daily life of the Benedictine Confederation. This model was later similarly used as a guide for governing the lives of laypeople. Military training and drills also aimed at inculcating the required dispositional elements. Besides learning the technical skills, recruits were first of all socialised to turn from civilians into soldiers, that is, to obey orders unconditionally and immediately and align with the rest of their unit.

The second ideal-typical form of habitus inculcation happens through reinforcement strategies, such as rewards and imitation techniques. These strategies are applied, first of all, by the school and the family – but are also present in several forms of intergroup relationships. The goals and expectations are usually developed and transmitted by a teacher, master, coach, parent or other reference person. Training generally ends with a rite of passage, including the distribution of written documents. Bourdieu describes such imitative habitus inculcation in *Distinction*, namely that lower-status social groups internalise the tastes, consumption patterns and lifestyles of the groups (usually) directly above them. Habitus inculcation can also occur through enticement, a strategy that is mainly practised by market actors who offer the promise of use value for the products they create.

However, it must be emphasised that these ideal-typical strategies of habitus inculcation occur only exceptionally in their pure forms; coercive strategies usually contain elements of reinforcement and vice versa. For instance, a piano teacher may prescribe exercises, and if they are not carried out, s/he can draw on a wide range of sanctions. By referring to the duration and strength of dispositions, I have made a distinction between *total disposition drill* and *partial disposition drill*. The former applies, first and foremost, to vocations in which wearing a uniform is compulsory (priest, police, soldier, etc.), while the latter can be applied to any profession and life situation. Finally, I have emphasised the *long-term cyclical nature of habitus inculcation*. As Elias makes evident, historical

processes are not irreversible, i.e. de-civilising turns can interrupt civilising processes. In other words, repressed dispositional patterns may surface anytime if the structuring conditions activate them.

Concluding remarks

The epistemological significance of the habitus concept is based on three factors. First, it suggests that social praxis is constituted not only by rational strategies but also by actions that arise from non-conscious, non-reflective drives – impulses, feelings, senses, urges and proclivities. Second, habitus is a mediating category implying that there is no direct link between social structures and social actions, giving agents – within the limits of structural constraints – a certain freedom of improvisation in the course of their actions. In other words, the proper use of the concept eliminates from sociological thinking the determinism that assumes a direct link between structures and actions. (This is why charges of determinism against Bourdieu are based on misunderstandings and oversimplification – as it is convincingly argued by Fáber (2017).)

Thirdly, this concept mediates not only between social structures and actions but also between different forms of actions. Bourdieu calls this habitus transfer, i.e. the capacity of agents to activate their dispositions in different domains of praxis – without consciously striving to do so or even being aware of it. Elias and Dunning also draw a parallel between the "parliamentarization" of 18th-century squires and the "sportization" of their leisure-time, arguing that men who sent deputies to parliament and pursued sports in one another's company were motivated by similar habitus components irrespective of their political orientation (Elias & Dunning, 1986). Their argument cautions that it would be ill-advised to take parliamentarianism as the cause and sporting customs as the effect because both were conditioned by the same structural specificities of 18th-century English society. Overall, then, this concept offers a more complex and nuanced picture of social reality; its application triggers the "sociological imagination" (C. Wright Mills) and opens new perspectives for sociological investigations.

However, to avoid misunderstandings, it is advisable to clarify what is *not* covered by the habitus concept. First, habitus is not the same as identity, since habitus refers to non-conscious, non-reflective, non-intentional forms of social action, while identity mainly denotes consciously assumed and (usually) declared elements of social belonging (indicating the national, religious, occupational, territorial, gender, etc., dimension of social embeddedness). Second, habitus theory only applies to a specific set of socially conditioned actions, i.e. we must distinguish between dispositional and rational action. It is to be emphasised that in addition to dispositional actions, social life is marked by many activities based on rational decisions. For example, the choice of a profession or a long-lasting relationship is usually not only based on irrational elements but on rational choices ("I can earn a good living as a lawyer", "I want to marry a rich man", etc.).

At the same time, rational choices may have dispositional consequences, since the act of practicing a profession or being married may, over time, inculcate previously non-existent dispositional patterns in the habitus. Thus, rational and dispositional actions are interdependent and complementary: The former defines the agenda that conditions the inculcation of dispositions over time. Therefore, if a sociologist pretends (and Bourdieu is not innocent in this respect) that a general theory of action can be developed by focussing *exclusively* on the notion of habitus, this appears to be highly questionable. It should be emphasised that teleological actions are also dependent on structural constraints: For example, the father of the mediaeval knight and statesman William Marshal would not have required his son to achieve ambitious goals if these expectations had not been imposed on him by the social environment.

When Bourdieu writes in *Distinction* that the habitus of an 'old cabinetmaker' generates identifiable practices in different spheres of his life, he emphasises only two explicit conditioning factors of an agent's embeddedness: his age and his occupation (the third – implicit – factor is gender, which is expressed by the personal pronoun). Undoubtedly, these factors condition the non-conscious and non-reflexive actions of an agent belonging to a given social group: The old cabinetmaker belongs to the traditional petty bourgeoisie by virtue of his profession, while he is a member of a prestigious sub-faction within the occupational group of carpenters. And being an elderly person, he is also different from a young cabinetmaker (leaving aside the issue of gender). In other words, by referring to the age-conditioned dispositional dimensions of an occupational group, Bourdieu identifies a form of plural habitus. It is a pity that he only does so implicitly.

However, the social reality is much more complex. If, for example, we assume that there are old, married, heteronormative, Catholic, metropolitan, well-off French carpenters and, say, young, unmarried, gay, Lutheran, rural, poor, Finnish carpenters, then we can not only identify occupational or class habitus, but also habitus defined by age, family status, sexual orientation, religion, place of residence, economic status, nationality and gender. It is therefore justified to speak of gender habitus, national habitus or age-conditioned (etc.) habitus. In addition, these patterns are constantly transformed during intra- and intergenerational mobility processes. Consequently, how dispositions are inculcated (including the strength and durability of the inculcation) is also subject to change: Some dispositions become stronger, others weaker. In other words, plural habitus is multi-determinate – both synchronously and diachronically. It is also to be stressed that plural habitus is a universal cultural fact typical not only of present-day Western settings but across a wide variety of historical periods and societies.

What this essay has produced is, let us repeat, an outline, a sketch, a series of hypothetical ideas. Nonetheless, I hope that these ideas can serve as a starting point for further research. I agree with Wacquant that Bourdieu was mainly interested in empirical problems and that pure theorising was not his bread and butter. There is a good chance of continuing the Bourdieusian tradition, which applies complex empirical techniques – ranging from questionnaires, interviews, observation protocols and statistical data to sophisticated mathematical-statistical methods (such as correspondence analysis) – thereby convincingly demonstrating that it is possible to conduct empirical research on habitus. More research can be expected on the inculcation of plural habitus, first and foremost in the tradition of the Bourdieusian sociology of education, with a would focus on the dimensions of school type, knowledge area, gender, etc., in order to analyse the different forms of inculcation of plural habitus. Patterns of plural habitus can also be investigated by other methods of analysis. I see considerable potential in the use of in-depth interviews, in Lahire's subtle analyses and in systematic investigations of methodological sources from the field of education – as mentioned by Bourdieu himself. I think that some of the methods of social psychology can also be applied to the study of plural habitus: For example, investigations of the sense of the game in actual game-like situations, both in vivo and in vitro conditions could be easily operationalized.

In other words, there are plenty of topics to be explored. The historical study of the long-term emergence and stratification of plural habitus – i.e. attempts to deepen and test the sketches outlined in sub-chapters 3.2 and 3.3 – seems to be a particularly exciting objective. Stimulating research questions can be formulated if we concentrate on a given dimension of plural habitus, such as gender, age, nationality, etc. Another interesting subject should be the analysis of the transformation of habitus from the perspective of social mobility research (including status mobility, acculturation, identity transformations via spiritual or political conversions, assimilation of mobile minorities, social integration of immigrants, language change, etc.). Other potentially edifying

enquiries might include the study of the transition between plural and cleft habitus; of agents with multicultural embeddedness (with multiple mother tongues, third-culture kids, globally mobile persons, etc.); or of the dispositional components of transgender and queer habitus – including the transitional areas between identity and habitus. An unexplored topic is the study of the blurred zones between dispositional and rational actions, namely how rational actions are converted into dispositional actions, and vice versa.

A comparative study of the different types of habitus inculcation (coercion, persuasion, enticement) could also bring new insights. I see great potential in studies that focus on the dispositional components of consumption patterns subject to the enticement of market institutions and actors. Examining the site of the inculcation is also an important issue: It does make a difference whether the inculcation takes place in a school, a religious community, a military organisation or a sports club, or whether it happens in a more or less democratic society or a dictatorship. One could also analyse the duration, form and extent of dispositional relaxation, supposing that its forms characterising young guildsmen in medieval Florence were different from those of IT specialists in their twenties working at a multinational company in 21st-century Berlin. One could go on listing further possible research issues. However, it is up to the international scientific community to complement, deepen and empirically test the hypothetical claims of this essay. Needless to say, I will be more than happy to take a share in these efforts.