

Reinstating Pierre Bourdieu's contribution to cultural economy theorizing



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Abstract

Systematic 'cultural economy' analysis is a recent development in a long history of sociological thought about the relationship between economy and culture. Two recent benchmark texts demonstrate various innovative ways of doing cultural economy. However, we believe these books betray ambiguity about the historical roots of cultural economy theory, and overlook the multiple disciplinary perspectives that engage with these ideas. Surprisingly, Pierre Bourdieu is rarely acknowledged as an important progenitor of cultural economy theory, despite the fact his large and influential body of work was primarily concerned with the interpenetration of cultural and economic power, processes and practices. An application of Bourdieu's ideas – in particular fields, habitus and capital – enriches cultural economy perspectives in three areas: the distinctive yet interdependent nature of cultural and economic spheres of action; attending to the role of power, class and economic relations in shaping culture; and understanding the daily lives of socially situated individuals.

Keywords: Bourdieu, consumption, cultural economy, field, habitus

The terrain of cultural economy

Social scientists increasingly acknowledge that research based on economic or cultural concepts alone is not sufficient to account for social processes. In the space of 15 years or so, at least five books and numerous chapters and articles have been devoted to cultural economy (e.g. Amin and Thrift, 2004; Appadurai, 1990; Callon, 1998; Dixon, 1999; du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Gibson and Kong, 2005; Halperin, 1994; Hinde and Dixon, 2005; Lash, 1993; Ray and Sayer, 1997; Scott, 2000). These accounts of what Halperin (1994) claims to be a new epistemic approach to the study of

social relations augment a growing literature which lies at the heart of the approach: observations on the simultaneous mobilization, and entwining, of cultural and economic processes.

The two most recent edited collections on cultural economy enlisted a number of distinguished researchers to explicate the field. The shared scope and contributors-in-common of *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life* (CEACL) edited by du Gay and Pryke (2002) and *The Blackwell Cultural Economy Reader* (BCER) edited by Amin and Thrift (2004) demonstrate the dominant way in which cultural economy is being cast. For this reason, we use them as a starting point for our account of approaches in this new trans-discipline called cultural economy.

The introductions to each of the two collections set out a broadly similar perspective on what constitutes 'cultural economy' research, although their editors formulate the problem differently. Amin and Thrift (2004: xv) argue for a movement beyond an additive definition, offering a perspective of a 'cultural economic ensemble with no clear hierarchy of significance'. To them, the particular strength of cultural economy research is to maintain that the 'economy' and 'culture' cannot be understood properly without the other, because: 'trying to break the two apart produces epistemic monsters which try to repress their own mixed origins in a way which is already all too familiar in other fields' (Amin and Thrift, 2004: xiv). This contrasts with du Gay and Pryke's (2002: 12) view that 'one can continue to use the terms "economy" and "culture" in doing "cultural economy" without one's practice falling apart'.

The two anthologies, nevertheless, are united by a desire to provide a more critical account of *homo economicus* than is present in much of the social sciences (Mingione, 1991). The elaboration of the cultural, particularly the symbolic, bases of economic knowledge that constitutes contemporary organizational and economic life, is the dominant thrust of both books.

Contributors to both collections explore cultural processes and actors in the economy. They include: cultural intermediaries, such as advertising agencies, who imbue goods and services with meaning (see CEACL: McFall; Negus; Nixon); the strategies by which the value-adding of quality and meaning takes place (see CEACL: Allen; Slater; and see BCER: Callon et al.; Hughes; Lury; Murdoch and Miele); the pivotal role of non-human actors, in the guise of formulae and computer-based technologies, in financial transactions; and how understandings of money are manipulated (see CEACL: Law; Thrift; and see BCER: P. Miller).

As well as highlighting the role of cultural processes in constructing the economy, du Gay and Pryke (2002) assess claims that this era is characterized by the increasing culturalization of the economy: the flowering of what are known as culture industries or creative industries. Amin and Thrift (2004) also focus on the culturalization of the economy thesis; however it is unclear where they sit in this regard. They appear to agree simultaneously

with the following propositions: (1) economies have always been culturally inspired; (2) economies are more culturally embedded than in the past; (3) it is not sufficient to argue that the economy is culturally embedded because cultural and economic performances are inevitably partnered.

The two texts illustrate the ways that cultural economy can engage critically with concepts previously presumed to be the domain of economics. The area is revealed as having potential to improve upon 'black box' assumptions within the discipline of economics, for example externalities, utility and the definition of the economy itself.

In describing the nature of this 'emergent' or 're-emergent' field (both terms are used), Amin and Thrift (2004) make three attempts to establish its lineage: they claim that it is 10 years old at one point; that it extends back to Daniel Bell's work on consumer society in the 1960s; and that perhaps it began with Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in the 18th century. Altogether, they name numerous sociological luminaries as contributors to the theoretical hybrid: Marx, Engels, Veblen, Weber, Foucault, Simmel, Benjamin and Bataille. While the editors refer to the venerable grand masters of sociology, it is as if to dispense with them; few contributors glimpse in their direction.

We notice there is a wider array of disciplines than is acknowledged in the collections that has generated material exploring the mutually constitutive nature of cultural and economic actions. Within social and cultural theory, there is a rich and diverse legacy of theorizing about culture and economy extending over the 20th century, summarized in Table 1.

In general terms, economic anthropology and economic sociology are well represented in the two anthologies. However, the extensive sociological legacy of theorizing about power appears to be dismissed in favour of the post-structuralist idiom. When it does appear, power is identified in terms of discipline, measurement/audit and corporate narratives (Amin and Thrift, 2004: xix, see Table 1). An Actor Network Theory approach to power is popular in both texts: power is decentred, highly context dependent and social relations arise in the process of enactment rather than being an *a priori* condition. It is experienced horizontally rather than being imposed vertically, is reflexive rather than determinate and network actors' subject positions are fluid.

Pierre Bourdieu and the cultural economy

The most significant theorist to be overlooked is, in our opinion, Pierre Bourdieu. This important sociologist does not appear in the lengthy index of the Amin and Thrift (2004) collection, and apart from an occasional brief reference, explicit applications of his theory in du Gay and Pryke's (2002) book are largely confined to his notion of cultural intermediaries. The main purpose of this article is to outline the value of Bourdieu's theory for enriching cultural economy research.

Table 1: Theorizing culture and economy

<i>Disciplines</i>	<i>Economic anthropology</i>	<i>Economic sociology</i>	<i>Cultural theory</i>	<i>Political economy</i>	<i>Political sociology</i>
Major theorists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Douglas and Isherwood • Appadurai • D. Miller 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simmel • Granovetter (1985) • Lash and Urry • Callon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frankfurt School of Social Research • Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies • Williams • Featherstone • Campbell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marx • Gramsci • Harvey (1989) • Friedland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weber • Parsons • Bell • Bourdieu
Major concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goods as an information system • Regimes of value ('a broad set of agreements concerning what is desirable, what a reasonable "exchange of sacrifices" comprises, and who is permitted to exercise what kind of effective demand in what circumstances') <p>(Appadurai, 1986: 57)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'tragedy of culture' • Embeddedness of social relations • Reflexive accumulation • Socio-technical systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and social order • Culture as ideology, or site of resistance? • Cultural materialism • Consumer culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture as reflex of economy, as substructure • Culture as a field of struggle • Circuits of capital and culture • Extended Commodity Systems • Approach, encompassing production relations and commodity culture (Friedland, 2001) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All social action can be categorized as economic activity, economically relevant activity (e.g. religion) and economically determined activity • Culture as critical to social order, and thus to capitalism • The cultural contradiction of capitalism

(continued)

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Disciplines	<i>Economic anthropology</i>	<i>Economic sociology</i>	<i>Cultural theory</i>	<i>Political economy</i>	<i>Political sociology</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social imperatives to consume 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different forms of capital: finance, symbolic, cultural and social • Cultural intermediaries
Major arguments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goods are a non-verbal medium used to stabilize culture • Globalization results from the transmission of regimes of value via five cultural economy flows: ethnoscapes, ideoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes • 'Consumption has become the vanguard of history' (Miller, 1995: 1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture is rationalized, via the money economy, where all value is reduced to money. • Inner life is reduced to commodity fetishism: subjective and objective life separate • Economic behaviour and institutions are constrained by ongoing social relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture industry and effects of mass culture on class consciousness • The symbolic field of ideology is discontinuous with, but mutually articulated with, the social field of class relations (Hall, 1977: 29 on Bourdieu) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commodity fetishism: the appearance and valuation of commodities mask the essence of their production, and in this way commodities come to dominate the lives of those who produce them • Power relations are a struggle over what is thinkable; cultural revolution will prefigure economic revolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calvinism's role in the formation of rational capitalism (Weber, 1947) • Culture is internalized in the personalities of individual actors and patterns the social system (Parsons, 1951)

(continued)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Consumption has become the vanguard of history' (Miller, 1995: 1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital accumulation is less dependent on the sale of goods than the trade in services, communications and information (Lash & Urry, 1994: 64) • Science and technology play major role in power relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The task is to analyse 'the specific relationships through which work and move' (Williams, 1989: 173) • The transition from a production to a consumption society involves cultural transition: decline in Protestant work ethic, rise in 'expressive', 'hedonistic' and 'romantic' ethos (Campbell, 1987) • 'Everyday life cannot be understood merely by conceptions of ... instrumental rational calculation' (Featherstone, 1987: 59) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical moments in the 'social process' include material practices, social relations, power, discourse/language, beliefs/values/desires, institutions/rituals (Harvey, 1996: 78) • Commodity chains have values embedded in them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalism operates on the basis of a disjunction between a disciplined workforce serving the techno-economic system versus pleasure-seeking citizens' Battles for hegemony operate as 'classfactory struggles' (Lash, 1990 on Bourdieu)

We are not the only sociologists to identify Bourdieu as a cultural economist. In one of the earliest treatments of what constitutes the cultural economy, Scott Lash (1990: 240) acknowledged a paper from Bourdieu written in 1971 as constituting 'the benchmark statement on the cultural economy'. Elsewhere Lash (1993: 193) noted that Bourdieu's 'general sociology of culture is a general theory of the economics of symbolic practice'.

The oversight is curious given that Bourdieu's widely read book *Distinction* (1984) gave a detailed and sophisticated theorization of concepts used extensively in the anthologies, namely: 'struggles over classification' (1984: 223); 'the cultural game' (1984: 251); 'culture-intensive craftsmanship and commerce' (1984: 141); the conversion and reconversion of various forms of capital, including finance and cultural capital (1984: 114–41); 'cultural intermediaries' and 'new professionals' (1984: 323); and 'symbolic integration' (1984: 154). Our article does not provide a complete account of Bourdieu's cultural economy but instead elaborates on the value of three concepts in particular – fields, habitus and capital – for cultural economy research.

Without attending to the accumulated wisdom across the social sciences, and in particular the works of Bourdieu, current research that coalesces under the banner of 'cultural economy' tends to suffer four problems:

- 1 There is a lack of in-depth examination of politics, power and class.
- 2 The frequent application of Actor Network Theory does not tread a clear path between dichotomous versus hybrid definitions of culture/economy.
- 3 The focus on understanding 'economics as culture', of exploring 'culturally encoded economies' (Allen, 2002: 40), offers a restrictive and one-way interpretation of the scope of the relationship between culture and economy.
- 4 Accounts of the everyday life of citizens – or, the experiences of people beyond culture industry workers – are largely missing.

This article elaborates each of these problems in turn, with reference to how an application of Bourdieu's concepts may improve the rigour and usefulness of cultural economy research.

Power, politics and class in the cultural economy

Amin and Thrift (2004) position cultural economy not alongside political economy but as a successor to what they call 'heterodox economics', socio-economics and political economy. They criticize political economists for continuing 'to accept such strong assumptions of systemic rationality and order that they too often oust non-rational, performative impulses (from desire to radical uncertainty) from being given their due consideration' (Amin and Thrift, 2004: x). At the same time, they claim that 'power is one of the key

aspects of the cultural economy approach' (2004: xxi), and proceed to describe power in terms reflecting post-structural currents. There are ample references to 'measurement tools' and 'corporate narratives', brands are positioned not as economic tools but as the 'passion to represent' and economic subjects are not defined by their place in the labour process but are created from discourses (e.g. Lury, 2004; P. Miller, 2004; Thrift, 2002).

Contrary to Lawrence Grossberg's testimonial on the cover of the du Gay and Pryke book that it heralds 'the beginning of the end of the strife between cultural studies and political economy', we find that the culturalist approach to corporate capital contained in both books eclipses the accumulated insight of political economy. Weber's (1947) point that all activity is at some stage relevant to economic activity is downplayed. Building on the efforts of political economy, Dixon (2002) and Goodman and DuPuis (2002) have argued that cultural economy ought also to concern itself with the cultural impacts of economic power, economic structures, commodity and labour markets and consumption practices. The economic sphere's influence over modern culture is missing from much that is being written under the cultural economy umbrella.

There are exceptions. In an economic anthropology account of the cultural economy trans-discipline, Rhoda Halperin (1994) acknowledges the contribution of Karl Polanyi. Polanyi (1944) in *The Great Transformation* attributed the disengagement of economics from both moral considerations and government deliberations to the eclipse of the international gold standard by the self-regulating market from the 1920s. Polanyi's work entwined economics, culture and power in a fashion akin to the neo-Marxists represented by Antonio Gramsci and the Frankfurt School of Social Research, but without their insistence on the role of ideological apparatuses and hegemonic processes in forging social consciousness. Polanyi's concerns for the alienation of labour from other life activities, with the market's displacement and erosion of cultural institutions is not represented in the two collections under discussion. As Mingione (1991: 22) has noted, Polanyi's contribution was to highlight how 'the full independence of a market-regulated economy means the subordination of society to market laws and that such subordination is incompatible with the very survival of society'.

The absence of an explicit politics regarding the social consequences of blurring economic and cultural activity has led to some disappointment with du Gay and Pryke's collection of cultural economy research (Jack, 2002). A concern with power relations would have entailed greater attention to how cultural-economic actors are influencing the management of national economies and organizational cultures based on the strategic 'unleashing' of creativity and enterprise; the changing balance of power between producers and consumers and between cultural producers and mass audiences/consumer markets; and the geo-political impacts of cultural-economy activity. A political re-orientation involves asking authors to address questions such as:

how are class relations being reconfigured as the professions increasingly provide services to market operators (what Sassen (1991) calls the 'producer services sector')? And, what are the social impacts of aesthetic or creative economies? It would also be pertinent to track the 'social life' of representations: 'including how such representations enter their journeys from field or factory to final consumption, or shape the calculations of capital (with respect to exchange value) and the choices of consumers (with respect to use value)' and who benefits along the way (Bernstein and Campling, 2006: 426).

In spite of many examples in their book to the contrary, du Gay and Pryke (2002: 6) observe that 'doing cultural economy' should not be confused with undertaking discursive analyses of economic objects. A little later they say that cultural economic analysis is concerned 'with the practical material-cultural ways in which "economic" objects and persons are put together from disparate parts' (2002: 8). But how economic relations are generated and performed, as we have suggested, is only one aspect of the cultural economy process; the other is how cultural systems are being assembled by economic actors and processes whether to aid the economic performance or, as Miller (2002) suggests, as an unintended by-product of it.

At no point in his 30 years of contributing to the cultural economy lexicon did Bourdieu shy away from scrutinizing power. His influence over the establishment of critical theory, cultural sociology and in political sociology is widely acknowledged to be profound (see Garnham and Williams, 1980; Hall, 1977; Swingewood, 1998: ch. 6). His early work on symbolic power, in particular, resonates with Marxist and Weberian arguments about the symbolic forms of domination required to produce dispositions suited to the pre-capitalist and capitalist systems; of the ideological and practical effects of mechanisms to assure the reproduction of the relations of domination; of the legitimation functions of the law and social policy (Bourdieu, 1977a).

In particular, Bourdieu repeatedly described the enormous effort that goes into producing an 'elective affinity' between goods and consumers, and he charted how symbolic production accompanies material production. He argued that 'the power to impose the legitimate mode of thought and expression ... is increasingly waged in the field of the production of symbolic goods' (Bourdieu, 1977b: 170). He also pointed out that this twin effort was not trouble-free, but that it was infused with struggles between producers, consumers and cultural intermediaries, such as those employed in the education system. While producers were trying to influence consumer receptivity to goods and their dispositions to act, in order to accumulate finance capital, consumers were using the goods to distinguish themselves in social space and to accumulate a variety of forms of capital.

Bourdieu's more recent work offers a framework for pursuing his agenda of revealing the social reproduction of power. *The Social Structures of the Economy* (2005) applies many of Bourdieu's concepts, especially fields, in demonstrating how the housing market reproduces disadvantage. This research

provided statistical descriptions of the distribution of capital between the classes, ethnographic accounts of the operation of enterprises and markets and a historical analysis of housing policy. Qualitative methodologies revealed how such structures intersected with groups' tastes, values and aspirations about family, domesticity and lifestyle, and consumers' experiences of buying a home. This cultural economy analysis showed that a house costs more than just a sum of money, but also requires 'an entire life-plan and style of life ... [with] implicit commitments [which] will have to be seen through to the end, that is to say, far beyond the last due date for the last payment' (Bourdieu, 2005: 186–7). Bourdieu shows how the 'home' is a major cultural and economic mechanism for maintaining inequality between social groups.

We demonstrate Bourdieu's usefulness to cultural economy research in the remainder of this article, by elaborating on the remaining three problems we identified in current accounts of the area: the conceptual blurring of culture and economy; the over-emphasis on the role of culture in shaping economy and neglect of the counterpoint; and a lack of insight into people's everyday life.

Thinking about *fields* to avoid hybridizing culture and economy

A tension for cultural economy researchers is how to delineate culture and economy. In particular, cultural economists seek to resist casting the two as dichotomous or mutually exclusive; or economic knowledge as rational and cultural knowledge as irrational or 'soft'. The section on the Economy of Passions in Amin and Thrift's BCER reflects this ambition, as do chapters in the CECACL collection by Heelas, and McRobbie.

For example, Amin and Thrift (2004) argue that it does not make sense to divorce the economy from culture because so much contemporary social action contains symbiotic elements of aggregation (or accumulation of resources) and ordering (or the passing of judgements on standards or qualities), whether by corporations or consumers. In the same chapter, they also explain that it is insufficient to say that cultural action is the same as economic action, or that cultural perspectives may simply add to understanding the economy. A compromise position is sought that defines the two processes as always intertwined, with neither more important nor fundamental. However, because it is not possible to identify the codification process behind much aesthetic or expressive activity, some argue that it is even not possible to assume a 'rapprochement between culture and the economy' (Allen, 2002: 54).

Both Amin and Thrift (2004) and du Gay and Pryke (2002) endorse Actor Network Theory (ANT) for examining cultural economy and explaining the interdependency of the labours of cultural and economic actors. Many of the authors in those collections demonstrate the worthwhile insights that can be gained from such a perspective (e.g. Allen, 2002;

Callon et al., 2004; Murdoch and Miele, 2004). Still, we suggest that viewing the cultural economy as a single network harbours a potential to overlook the multiple contestations, contradictions and synergies between and within the efforts of social actors. This blindness constitutes a loss of the conceptual rigour offered by considering the distinct properties of economic and cultural activity.

The ANT approach, which inevitably leads to hybrid actors and processes, is well exemplified in John Law's chapter in du Gay and Pryke (2002). Law uses Weber's category of 'economically relevant' activity (albeit without reference to Weber) to describe the science of accountancy and its role in spawning an audit society. Unlike Weber, Law refuses to identify any one logic at work: instead he argues that '[p]ractice is larger, more complex, more messy, than can be grasped within any particular logic' (Law, 2002: 34). The Weberian logic of rationalization imposed by markets and bureaucracy is anathema to Law's view of late 20th-century public sectors. However, it is equally clear that in refusing to distinguish between economic and what are called 'non-economic strategies', cultural economists can end up theorizing the cultural and economic spheres as having no autonomy at all, nor with their own unique modes of logic or specific qualities.

We propose that Bourdieu offers another perspective for resolving these tensions. His theory conceptualizes culture and economy as separate but not opposing, as interdependent but not the same. Bourdieu's notion of *fields* helps to explain the 'macro'-level operation of culture and economy in society.

Fields employs the analogy of space to describe how groups of individuals, namely classes, occupy different relative positions in society (Bourdieu, 1998). The location of a class, or individual, in social space is the product of their relative success in competing for the particular type of capital at stake in a given field. Put most simply, in the economic field agents struggle to acquire money, to ensure the value of their assets and to maintain their capacity to continue to own and acquire such things. In the cultural field, people compete for cultural capital, or the ability to appreciate, produce and understand 'legitimate' forms of knowledge. A capacity to possess such capital is acquired through formal institutions – education, museums, galleries, etc. – as well as informally through the family (Bourdieu, 1998).

In a given field, agents struggle to maintain their position by following the 'rules of the game' in that field – for example, within the structures of capitalism in the market, or according to the definitions of academic success in educational institutions. Success in a field is the result of effortlessly and effectively following the rules and/or strategically using the rules to one's own advantage. Moreover, the powerful class factions are continually modifying the rules or establishing new ones – thus staying ahead of the other classes and ensuring the rules always work in their favour. Bourdieu (1984) explains how the dominant classes in the cultural and economic fields each set the rules of the field to their own advantage, thereby maintaining their power.

According to Bourdieu (1984), there is much to be learnt about the reproduction of power by studying not only *competition for* capital within a field, but also the *transformation or exchange of* capital between fields. For example, economic capital can be transformed into cultural capital: an individual spends economic capital to acquire cultural capital through formal education; and companies may gain power in the cultural field by establishing or influencing cultural institutions. Conversely, cultural capital can be transformed into economic capital through the use of cultural works and specialist knowledge in the economy.

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) described how the factions within the dominant class struggle to increase the overall reach of their power by creating and exploiting connections between the cultural and economic fields. These groups continually transform their capital, maximizing the yield of such transformations by contesting the terms of exchange, via the rules of the game in the two fields. Bourdieu states that the struggles within and between the cultural and economic fields are among the most salient in understanding social power. Thus, at the heart of Bourdieu's theory was an account of the functioning and significance of the 'cultural economy'.

A major advantage of this theory is that it is grounded in a concern to reveal the social fundamentals of class and power relations in accounting for social action. Culture and economy are manifestations of these struggles, albeit complex ones which take on a life of their own. A cultural economy approach that is influenced more by Bourdieu than by those working with hybrids (including Actor Network theorists, reflexive accumulation theorists, convention theorists) is therefore more alert to:

- The needs of capitalists and capitalist enterprises for cultural capital, symbolic power and the capacity to dominate discourse, to continue to exploit labour and the environment.
- The class position of the new cultural intermediaries.
- People's relationships with both production and consumption activities.
- An individual's scope for social practice is delimited by their position in social space; there is less fluidity in socio-economic status than hybridists contend.

Building on this last point especially, we next turn to Bourdieu's idea of *habitus*, which helps to explain how economic structures generate cultural practices – offering another perspective within the cultural economy research endeavour.

Habitus – how the cultural economy structures culture

While the two most recent edited collections offer a firm rhetorical emphasis on culture and economy as equally important counterparts in an

intertwined system, there is a curious privileging of one feature: namely, the increased/increasing 'culturalization' of the economy. The one-sided thrust is captured by du Gay and Pryke's (2002: 6) assertion that 'doing cultural economy' means attention to 'economics as culture' (Warde's chapter in the CECACL collection is a notable exception). Too little resonates with Weber's interest in the economic determination of cultural life such as trade unionism, or the insights about ideologies and capitalist hegemony from the Frankfurt School of Social Research and Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. In our terms, the collections devote plenty of attention to the potency of cultural processes, works and practices and scant analysis of the structuring nature of economics: especially upon culture, understood as the socially inspired rhythms of life, in post-industrial society.

Another of Bourdieu's concepts assists here. *Habitus* is the embodied disposition shared by members of a class. The concept refers to a person's way of being: their manner, what they do, how they feel about things, what they buy, how they eat, their leisure pursuits, etc. One's practices and commodities reflect a set of unconscious underlying principles, concerns and strategies: namely, their habitus (Bourdieu, 1998). This idea draws directly on the notion of culture, as in the shared norms and practices of a group of people (a class) whereby, 'the rules and structures of perception that pertain to a particular habitus are inscribed on, and in, individuals as if they were "human nature"' (Webb et al., 2002: 39).

The habitus enables people to compete for capital by acting in ways that provide advantage within the field while also distinguishing them from other classes located elsewhere in the field (Bourdieu, 1998). In particular, the habitus of the dominant class enables its members to abide superbly by – and where appropriate, find ways to modify – the rules of the game, thereby always distinguishing their identity as elite and reproducing their power.

People acquire their habitus – their tastes, preferences and manner – through exposures and experiences from family, school and elsewhere during childhood. The scope of formative, and adult, experience is circumscribed by the opportunities and constraints that come with occupying a particular location in the fields. Accordingly, Bourdieu defines a class as a group of people who experience social structure from a similar point of reference: 'the *objective class*, [is] the set of agents who are placed in homogeneous conditions of existence' (Bourdieu, 1984: 101, emphasis in original). As Bourdieu (1998: 8) explains, 'the habitus is this generative and unifying principle which retranslates ... position into a unitary lifestyle, that is, a unitary set of choices of persons, goods and practices'.

The 'homogeneous conditions' that Bourdieu says matter especially for generating the habitus, and defining class, are those associated with one's location within the economic and cultural fields. He states that there are

three important dimensions that define social space, delimit the classes and therefore shape habitus (Bourdieu, 1984: 114–16):

- 1 Overall volume of economic and cultural (and also social) capital.
- 2 Composition of that capital (ratio of economic to cultural capital).
- 3 Changes in the above two over time, i.e. social trajectory (this accounts for the continual struggle to acquire capital and maximize its ‘exchange’ value).

Bourdieu thought class to be an outcome of a group’s success within, and across, the cultural and economic fields. He therefore used a theory of cultural economy to articulate the mechanisms through which social, cultural and economic processes and structures shape people’s cultural dispositions.

Thus far we have explained how Bourdieu’s theory establishes inter-relationships between cultural processes, economic processes and cultural practices, all with reference to sociology’s bread-and-butter: struggles for power, class relations and consideration of social reproduction. Next, we will explain how his theory also offers a resolution about the nature of ‘economic’ or rational practice versus aesthetic or symbolic practice.

Understanding everyday practices as competition for capital

Bourdieu (1998) explained that people’s social practices are driven by an unconscious ambition to accumulate capital and move to better locations within social space. Moreover, people enter competitions for capital with different resources at their disposal. Thus, individuals have multiple objectives and varying means, yielding a multiplicity of strategies for maximizing capital across the fields, giving rise to complex, weird and wonderful social practices. This spectrum of variation is characterized in Bourdieu et al. (1999) *The Weight of the World*, which illustrated how the operation of power across social space, and its manifestation in place, gives rise to unpredictably diverse circumstances, biographies and ways of life.

Bourdieu’s (1998) conception of capital expands on simplistic notions of ‘rational action’. It explains how people can have multiple, sometimes contradictory, motivations. Capital takes multiple forms, so when a person’s behaviour seems ‘irrational’ it is probably better explained with reference to multiple interests, rather than in terms of purely financial concerns. Lebaron (2003: 558) summarizes how Bourdieu’s ‘capital’ has ‘a non-monetary and non-quantitative meaning as if “social evaluation” was a general phenomenon, whereas strictly monetary or quantitative evaluations are historically specific constructs giving birth to the “economic field”’.

A person’s orientation towards maximizing multiple kinds of capital at once is mostly unconscious, and is experienced as tastes, emotions, preferences, habits. Bourdieu suggests a way in which economic or calculative knowledge may exist in harmony with aesthetic and symbolic knowledge –

both are embodied in habitus. Indeed, calculative knowledge most frequently plays out in habitus as aesthetic or emotional instincts: a 'feel for the game'. A theoretical dichotomy between economic versus cultural knowledge is not required because habitus allows for both.

Importantly, however, Bourdieu did not equate calculative and strategic knowledge with aesthetic, intellectual or creative knowledge; nor did he mean that all knowledge is relative, boiling down to self-interest (Bennett, 2005). Rather, Bourdieu's philosophy supports the idea that some forms of aesthetic knowledge represent a pursuit of truth grounded in a history of human intellectual achievement. He is troubled by a scenario where the dominant classes seize and maintain exclusive access to such forms of higher-order, 'pure' or 'universal', knowledge in order to maintain their position in the cultural field and their overall power (Bennett, 2005).

Amin and Thrift (2004: xiv) seem to agree with the idea that people's practices have multiple intentions, suggesting that a cultural economy theory of social action accommodates people's 'pursuit of many goals at once: from meeting material needs and accumulating riches to seeking symbolic satisfaction and satisfying fleeting pleasures'. However, consumers, citizens and service users make only brief appearances in the collection: possibly because they are so tightly implicated in actor networks that it is not necessary to identify their distinctive interests.

Despite du Gay and Pryke's (2002) assertion about cultural economic forces operating at different levels, one has to go beyond the research represented in these books to appreciate how macro-cultural economies have a bearing on micro-cultural economies. There is too little regard, for instance, for how commercial pressures can limit the circulation of unorthodox or oppositional ideas (an exception being the chapter by Negus in the CECACL collection); or whether different modes of production (mass, flexible) are encouraging a "fluidity" of socio-economic life' with implications for everyday practices like diet (discussed briefly by Murdoch and Miele, 2004: 244).

While considerable evidence is provided that the demand of goods, services and experiences is not innocent or freely chosen, we learn too little of the consumer perspective of the conscious and unconscious acceptance of, and resistance to, ideas associated with the good life, a healthy life, a moral life and a disciplined life. There is plenty of attention to the role of the cultural intermediary, those actors who make up, define, drive the economy using their specialist knowledge, but few accounts of the citizen, the father or mother, the neighbour.

The market is but one site where transactions take place, where strategies are employed and struggles for power occur. We believe an emphasis on capitalist firms and networks neglects the multi-faceted nature of social existence. These problems arise from the scale at which much cultural economy analysis is conducted. There is a heavy focus on the level of the pro-

ducer and manager within the organization, market, commodity chain, governing institution, the network or global system.

Daniel Miller, who contributed to both books, has elsewhere elaborated the type of research approach required to study social changes under capitalism. Ethnography of society, rather than ethnography of business, is necessary, he argues, to understand consumption: commodity value is a process of accretion from kinship, household, ethnicity and firm (Miller, 1997: 310). He stresses the need for a long-term and multi-pronged engagement in the field. Interviews and participant observation are conducted among material and symbolic producers, traders, consumers/citizens and citizen representatives. His approach makes it possible to practise in a less mechanistic way the twin circuits of culture-capital approach that was criticized by Amin and Thrift (2004) for its merely additive perspective.

Bourdieu's theoretical approach and methods delve to a finer level of 'magnification': his cultural economy is made up of groups of socially situated people, conceived as citizens, families, consumers, employees and producers, whose concerns extend across multiple fields of action. His extensive sociology, spanning three decades, used multiple methodologies to examine embodied dispositions, values, beliefs and emotions and how people interact with each other and with organizations such as firms, governing bodies and marketplaces.

Bourdieu investigated the socially variegated sources of gratification and esteem that surround a social practice, as well as its material costs and benefits. The following passage encapsulates how Bourdieu (1984: 101) theorized the cultural economy:

one only has to ask the question which economists strangely ignore, of the economic conditions of the production of dispositions demanded by the economy, ie in this case, the question of the economic and social determinants of tastes, to see the necessity of including in the complete definition of the product, the differential experiences, which the consumers have of it as a function of the dispositions they derive from their position in economic space.

Conclusion

For more than half a century, many significant theorists (e.g. Bell, 1976; Lash and Urry, 1994; Polanyi, 1944) have highlighted how modernity is accompanied by the decoupling of culture, economy and politics. More recently a range of disciplines has been asserting that culture and economics are well and truly enjoined, some believing in unprecedented ways. Cultural economists study the points where economy and culture influence, juxtapose, fuse, feedback or transform each other, where each process is better understood with conceptual and empirical reference to the other.

The importance of a cultural economy trans-discipline that draws on older as well as more recent theorizing is that it has the potential to re-couple

culture, economy *and* politics. Bourdieu can be seen as a key exponent of older theorizing, whose work is capable of elucidating the interdependent, mutually constructed and sustaining nature of economy and culture.

Instead of positing a new hybrid of seamless appropriation of cultural processes by economic actors, Bourdieu considered the cultural field to be autonomous from the economics field. At the same time, however, his field-negotiated processes of taste-making and the commodification of taste entailed the economics field exerting sway over the cultural field. He explained that economic capital had come to dominate because it is easier to transmit and objectify: and is therefore easier to protect, manage, calculate, predict and – ultimately – control.

A cultural economy perspective that is inspired by Bourdieu alerts us to the following:

- The field is a space of struggle and competition for capital, and economic capitalists need to dominate discursive formations across multiple fields to continue to exploit labour and nature.
- Many professions and technologies have been enrolled to perform these symbolic activities, and to aid the capital conversion process.
- Embodied history (*habitus*) reveals the importance of people's relationships with both production and consumption activities for generating social consciousness.
- How, in Simmel's terms, the society-level 'external culture' impacts on the embodied 'internal culture'.
- How cultural hegemony is 'refused, diffused, absorbed, reproduced, and reconfigured, given the particularities of its interpolation into multiple contexts and under different pretexts by various agents' (Palumbo-Liu, 1992: 4).

Taken together, an application of fields, *habitus* and capital rejuvenates our understanding of late modernity's capacity for social reproduction. Like Weber, who pointed out the importance of a homology between capitalist ideas and capitalist activities and the 'inner compulsion', or psychological aspect of ideologies, Bourdieu draws our attention to what it takes to reproduce dynamically the class system, via the cultural economy.

Bourdieu's cultural economy is an elegant theory of how cultural, economic and symbolic relations are variously structured, embodied and practised. In this article we have demonstrated how Bourdieu's contribution enriches cultural economy theorizing and offers solutions to some of the traps and tensions that exist for this trans-discipline. The theory facilitates a conceptual rigour in thinking about culture and economy as different but not independent, or opposing, spheres of action. It enables a broadening beyond the dominant research momentum that highlights 'economics as culture' and the culturalization of the economy. If cultural economy is to be a major advance on previous sociological perspectives, its concepts should

build on and augment those from political economy, especially class relations, social reproduction and the exercise of power. Bourdieu's framework enables sociology to examine the subtle and sophisticated ways that culture and economy are manipulated by, and for, powerful groups instead of being put to the service of humanity.

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