The 'Realpolitik of Reason': Thinking International Relations through Fields, *Habitus* and Practice

By
Anna Leander, (ale.ikl@cbs.dk)
Copenhagen Business School / University of Southern Denmark
Department of Intercultural Communication and Management

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THE 'REALPOLITIK OF REASON': THINKING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THROUGH FIELDS, *HABITUS* AND PRACTICE[1]

Anna Leander

Introduction

This paper introduces the qualitative method used by scholars looking at the social world, including the world of international relations, as Fields, *Habitus*, and Practices – those using what I will term a "FIHP approach" for short. The FIHP approach and the related method are closely associated with the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002). However, it is also more than this. The FIHP approach has taken on a life of its own. Scholars in a areas as varied as social theory, philosophy, anthropology, gender studies, management and International Relations (IR) have used and developed the approach for their own purposes. They have written introductions suitable for their own areas of study.[2] They have elaborated the approach and its method often in directions neither anticipated nor always appreciated by Bourdieu. He felt the approach was often misunderstood and misappropriated when used outside its (national and political) context (e.g. Bourdieu 2000c; also Bourdieu 1999). The introduction here is to the qualitative method used by the "FIHP approach" broadly defined – not only to Bourdieu's work but – to the more general "thinking tools" with special consideration given to their application in International Relations (IR).

In order to present this method, the paper proceeds in four steps. It begins by introducing the (1) kinds of questions the method is used to answer, insisting that these are questions about real world social relations where symbolic power and violence are central. It then presents the "method" used to answer these questions. This method combines (2) very general "thinking tools" (field, *habitus*, and practices) and (3) their contextual and varied application. This combination makes the method useable for the analysis of a wide range of different contexts and problems. It also gives the researcher a considerable freedom to shape the own research. This evokes the question of how to the validity of work done with the method is assessed. The paper's final section explains that (4) reflexivity plays a pivotal role. As a consequence, reflexivity is an integral part of the methodology associated with the approach.

1. Real World Social Practices

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[1] Patient readers of the earlier versions of this paper have made helpful comments. These include Stefano Guzzini, Jef Huysmans, Simon Kragh, Hans Krause Hansen, Karen Lund Petersen, Rens van Munster Dorte Salskov Iversen and especially, Audie Klotz and the thoughtful students in her seminar for which the original version of this paper was prepared.

[2] See for some examples (Adkins and Skeggs 2004; Calhoun, LiPuma and Potone 1993; Fowler 2000b; Jenkins 1992; Harker, Mahar and Wilkes 1990; Lahire 1999c; Lane 2000; Pinto 1998; Shusterman 1999; Swartz and Zolberg 2004; Wacquant 2005c; Webb, Schirato and Banaher 2002).

The method a study uses cannot be dissociated from the type of research questions it sets out to deal with. Methods serve a purpose. One does not drill holes with a hammer or fix nails with a drill. Similarly, when working in the social sciences and IR it is important to acknowledge that methods can do different things and that therefore which method one choses is related to what questions one is trying to answer. In the case of the FIHP method, these questions are focussed on symbolic power and violence understood through real world social practices rather than through discourse analysis. The reason for this sociological and empirical framing is that the significance of discourses is thought to be inseparable from social practices and this for two reasons. One is that the impact of a discourses is inseparable from the social positions of and contexts of those articulating them. The second is that the significance of a discourse is inseparable from the way it is part of tacit and unarticulated social practices. Neither of these can be observed in texts/discourses separated from their social context.

Concretely, this means that the FIHP approach is helpful for those who have accepted that meaning and representation play a central role in social life (see the introduction to this book[3]) and who are interested in questions about real world hierarchies, power and violence. The FIHP method is useful for thinking about who gains and who loses, though what kind of processes. For example, who is (dis-)empowered by the understanding of sovereignty as a basic international institution or by the current anti-corruption discourse and by what kind of processes? The FIHP is also good for questions about why inter-subjectively shared understandings look as they do and by what processes they are established or finally and how they change in time. For example why do our security understandings look as they do, what were the processes through which they were established and through what processes might they change? Concretely, the approach looks at real world social practices more than it does on discourses and texts. This gives the approach a squarely sociological framing placing practices at the centre of analysis.[4] Indeed, the applied, empirical nature of work drawing on this approach is one of its distinctive characteristics.

The first reason for the empirical focus is that the FIHP perspective privileges

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[3] This is not necessarily an aspect of "qualitative method" which can be both explanatory and understanding. Ragin e.g. defines qualitative research as "a basic strategy of social research that usually involves in-depth examination of a relatively small number of cases. Cases are examined intensively and with techniques designed to facilitate the clarification of theoretical concepts and empirical categories." (Ragin 1994: 190). This clearly leaves open how the cases are examined.

[4] Bourdieu's own work also has a philosophical side (e.g. Bourdieu 1982a, 2000b) which has inspired and been developed for example by (Boltanski and Thevenot 1991). In this paper it is his sociological work that is at the centre.

the performative efficacy[5] of language and interpretative schemes which it sees as is directly tied to the authority of the speaker (Bourdieu 1982a). It is not *what* you say but *where* you say it from that matters. In that sense, the significance of discourses and texts is inseparable from the social structures which grants that authority as well as from the congruence of the performative enunciation with the context in which it is made. The mystery of the minister's authoritative fabrication of a political collective to be represented (let's say Per Stig Møller's fabrication of the Danmark to represented in the Mahomet drawings case) is comprehensible only because of the existence and acceptance of the social institution of a foreign ministry and the acceptance of Per Stig Møller's authority to invest it. His views (and the discourses they reflect) on the drawings have a very different impact than would yours, mine or Yussuf's if we tried to voice them. Concretely, The implication is that it makes little sense to take an interest in texts and discourses independently of social practices and power relations. Trying to do so is something FIHP scholars consider a major mistake (a "genetic fallacy" in Bourdieu's phrasing). Instead, they insist that the significance and development of discourses and meaning has to be studied through an analysis of concrete social structure and hierarchy. The approach is imbued with an economistic terminology that is more than a communicative ploy. It serves to underline the immediate links to the material world.[6]

The focus on meaning produced in context explains the sociological, empirical and practice focussed nature of FIHP studies. It also explains why the FIHP approach has been presented as a "constructivist structuralism" (e.g. Fowler 2000a: 1; Wacquant 2005b: 136). The focus is the source of the deep-seated and much publicized disagreement between "post-modernists" and those who work along FIHP lines in France (e.g. Bourdieu 2001: 201-5)[7]. This is frequently glossed over in the Anglo-Saxon world, perhaps because both are French and emphasise meaning and interpretation. However, the sociological and empirical focus of the FIHP approach and its insistence of socially anchored, speaker identified authority does make for a substantial difference. Certainly many post-modernists will find it hard to identify with Brubakers' summary

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[5] Speech act theory distinguishes the *locutionary* (saying something), the *illocutionary* (doing something by saying something e.g. a promise) and the *perlocutionary* (the impact of a statement on the hearers) dimensions of an utterance. In this scheme the FIHP is clearly more intent on the last of the dimension of the scheme. For discussions and applications to IR see Kratochwil (1989).

[6] Bourdieu's ambition in his pivotal work *Distinction* was to develop "a general economy of practices".

[7] He argued that post-modernism (the appearance of which he linked to the attempt to introduce progressive reform after May 1968) effectively blocked progressive change and thinking in French universities as well as in society at large. It did so because of its valuation of intellectual "postures" (difficult to argue with and hard to imitate for outsiders to the intellectual elite), by its disdain for empirical work based on rigorous and clear standards and more generally by its undermining of the status and credibility of empirical sociological research explicitly focussing on power and oppression.

of the general thrust of the FIHP approach suggesting that it

> "attempts to systematize Weber's thought in a quasi-Marxian mode and to 'subjectivize' Marxian thought by incorporating the Durkeheimian concern with symbolic forms and Weberian concern with symbolic power and symbolic goods in its systematic view of the social world as structure of class-based power and privilege" (2004: 33).

A second reason for the sociological and empirical orientation of work in the FIHP approach is that the role of symbolic power and violence[8] in shaping social practices and reproducing real existing and identifiable social hierarchies is a – if not the – pivotal research focus. The point of departure is similar to that of constructivists namely that inter-subjectively shared understandings (discourses) systematically advantage and disadvantage social actors. However, the FIHP approach gives two twists to this general understanding. The first is the emphasis on "misrecognition" or *illusio*. The idea (with parallels in Gramscian and Foucauldian thought) is that symbolic power is particularly efficacious when it is not recognised, but working through practices that are seemingly disinterested and unrelated to social power and hierarchy such as scientific, cultural, or artistic practices (Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper 1990; Sapiro 2004) or closer to IR through humanitarian/economic aid (Duffield 2002) or local empowerment (Chandhoke 2003).

The other twist is introduced with the notion of "symbolic violence", where the effects of symbolic power are exercised and reproduced by those who suffer from it and entails their active participation, i.e. situations where "the victims are active perpetrators" (Betensky 2000). Symbolic violence is the violence that is done for example when women engage in practices perpetuating the oppression of women in society (McRobbie 2004; Lawler 2004) or central bankers implement economic policies that not only fail in their aims but aggravate the problems they are supposed to solve (Hirschman 1981). They engage in these practices without reflecting, because they have a sense of practice which makes them consider this the right thing to do, independently of explicit pressures or threats.

The specific understanding of symbolic power and violence makes texts in isolation of their sociological context insufficient. Texts can have a wide range of empowering and dis-empowering implications. However, all of these do not play a role in social practices, nor do they have the same significance for all social groups. To get a grasp of which ones do and how, as well as where change might come from, it is necessary to move down to the level of practices and ask which implications actually

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[8] Symbolic power refers to the inter-subjectively produced power which is a central aspect of all power (including material power) (Bourdieu quoted in Wacquant 2005a: 17; also Lebaron 2004). Symbolic violence to the fact that this power is exercised and reproduced also by those who suffer from it as it presupposes their active participation.

are visible social reality and why. For example, we may be able to identify key positions on the Afghan conflict by reading through the archives. But if we want to understand and explain the development of the conflict and power relations in the country we need to understand how these positions are related to actual political practices by different groups in Afghanistan. It is not possible to assume some kind of correspondence or automatic relationship (Bourdieu 1980).

This step is all the more important if one takes the ideas of symbolic violence and mis-recognition seriously. These cannot be read off texts. The active participation inherent in symbolic violence can only be seen through the actual practice. Similarly, the social efficacy of mis-recognition cannot be read off a text. It comes about in social practice. Finally, many of the schemes and taken for granted understanding informing social behaviour are not captured in texts or discourses at all. They are not explicitly articulated.[9] They are implicit in practices rather than in texts. This is particularly relevant if one wants to look not only at elites but also at other groups in society. To continue with the Afghan example, to understand the evolving position of women written positions (in archives, newspapers, literature, or diplomatic dispatches) are not sufficient. We have to consider the social and political practices of women and their evolution in the internationalized conflict context.

The FIHP approach reverses the order of priorities that marks a good share of qualitative analysis in IR. Rather than starting from "discourses" and "representations" and then explaining (or more often assuming) practice in the light of these, the FIHP starts from practices and then builds up an understanding of how "discourses" and "representations" reproduce these. This means that actors have to be named and identified. Who speaks (and who does not) is essential as meaning and effects of discourses is linked to it. The FIHP approach asks questions about symbolic violence and power in an empirical world. To answer its own questions, the FIHP approach therefore needs a method that allows it to analyse empirical social (micro sociological) practices to get an understanding how symbolic power and violence are reproduced there. What is need is a real world power oriented method. It has such a method based on the combination of (i) very general – verging on universal – "thinking tools" and (ii) their contextual operationalization. These will be introduced in order.

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[9] This is classical feminist point. For one application in IR see Hansen (2000) for a FIHP related discussion (Butler 1999).

2. General "Thinking Tools": Fields, *Habitus* and Practices

In order to answer their questions about symbolic power and violence in empirical contexts the FIHP scholars depart from a few very general thinking tools: the field, the *habitus* and the practices.[10] They are tools which tell the analyst what to go out and look for in order to answer the questions s/he raises. These thinking tools are set up to give the analysis its basic shape. They are very general in nature in that they can be applied to an seemingly infinite variety of contexts and subjects. They also work together as a whole even if it is common for analysts to rely on one thinking tool more than the others in their work.

The first central thinking tool is the field.[11] The idea is that in order to make sense of the social world, it is useful to acknowledge that it is divided into relatively autonomous social sub-systems which follow their own "laws" and logic (Bourdieu 1979: 127). These "laws" define what kind of positions persons will have in that specific field and relatedly what struggles are about. The way FIHP scholars think about positioning is in terms of the "capital" of different actors in a field. What capital is and how it is valued is itself defined by the field. Capital here is not money or property, or at least not only or necessarily. Capital is what is recognised as a resource in a specific field. Capital (economic, social, cultural or symbolic) is a "social relation", "a social energy". Hence in diplomacy, the NGOs world, the community of central bankers or of radical Islamists, different forms of capital confer advantages. A typical start of a FIHP analysis would be to try to make a scheme plotting central actors in according to their endowment of different forms of capital to vizualise what kind of combinations of capital exist in the field.

But fields are not only about plotting static positions defined by "objectively" measurable capital endowments. Fields are also dynamic terrains of struggle. Actors in a field share an understanding of "the stakes at stake". They will struggle to improve their own position (i.e. capital endowment) and/or to alter the general definition of the stakes at stake, possibly by altering the boundaries of the field.[12] Their possibility for doing this will be linked to what kind of resources they have. For example, Lebaron has analysed the change in the field of French economists that occurred when neo-classical economics based on econometric modelling became dominant in these terms (2000).

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[10] The term thinking tools is taken from Bourdieu as e.g. quoted in (1992).

[11] The notion of field is often the focal point for scholars interested in the empirical application of the FIHP as it serves to delimit their field of study. This is visible in the rather frequent choice of using "field analysis" (or of simply naming the field) in titles including and/or the temptation to describe the FIHP with reference to it (e.g. Couldry 2004; Brown and Szeman 2000).

[12] See for example Jenkins (1992: 84), Pinto (1998, chap 3) or Lahire (1999a).

Lebaron's analysis also underscores the fact that fields are only *relatively* autonomous. They exist in the context of other fields and drawing on capital accumulated in these field and introducing them in the own context is an important strategy for redefining a field. For Lebaron's economists, diplomas from the US/UK university world were of particular relevance. Indeed, some fields are particularly central (these are sometimes referred to as meta-fields) because they continuously shape other fields. Hence, meta-fields such as the field of politics or the field of education shape other fields all the time. In Lebaron's analysis e.g., the reshaping of public policies in education and with regard to the economy which took place outside the field of economics as such and largely independently of struggles there, played a central role for the outcome. This linkage between fields and in particular the existence of meta-fields increases the transferability of practices of domination and violence. It also explains what one might call the"structural homology" between fields and the role of fields in (re)-producing the broader structure of power and domination (Wacquant 2005b: 141).

At this point it is important to introduce the second central thinking tool of the FIHP – the *habitus* to give substance to the "strategy" and "struggles" introduced.[13] People have resources (capital) which grant them possibilities to act. They also have "dispositions" and taken for granted understandings functioning as an intuitive guide to action and hence shape how they act. In the FIHP these dispositions is referred to as a *habitus* to underscore their habitual and unreflected nature. The *habitus* shapes "strategies" for accumulating capital and for reshaping fields, but also taste, life-styles, marriage strategies. This has strong implications for power relations. The *habitus* of some people will make them reproduce their own disadvantaged positions while that of others will not. The *habitus* of some people will make them push for specific kinds of change. The *habitus* of others will make them resist it. Hence, for example in trying to explain the institutionalization of international human rights, Mikael Rask Madsen insists on the background (micro-history in his own words) of the central characters driving (and resisting) this institutionalization. He tries to understand the dispositions which made them push for the institutionalization of human rights in the way they did (Madsen 2004).

The *habitus* shapes how a person sees the world and acts in it. Since doing the "right" thing is of essence, the *habitus* is also an important part of a person's

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[13] The term *habitus* was not invented by Bourdieu. It has long been used among sociologist and plays a central role in the work of e.g. Norbert Elias (1998/1939). However, its usage in Bourdieu inspired work has attracted considerable attention from scholars outside it as it provides a link between discourse analysis and theories of action. See e.g. (Chauviré 1995; Coleman and Bourdieu 1991; Lawler 2004; McNay 1999; Margolies 1999; Bouvresse 1999; Bronckart and Schurmans 1999; Taylor 1999; Silverstein 2003; Crossely 2003).

"resources". It is therefore only logical that the *habitus* is also though of as "incorporated capital". It is a resource embodied in the a person. The *habitus* is also incorporated in the strong sense of being having a bodily expression. The eating habits, interests, cultural choices etc. that constitute a life style produce the body and the body language that is what might be called a bodily *hexis*.[14] This in turn is part and parcel defining social power and violence. Hence, in his analysis of the (post)-colonial cosmopolitan elite, Dezalay (2004) shows the importance of tastes and life-styles in establishing an independent elite. Dress codes and bodily expression are sufficiently significant to warrant a photo series of Jawaharlal Nehru and his father to be reproduced as part of the analysis.

The *habitus* is an agent level thinking tool, but it is linked to the different fields a person is part of. The *habitus* (like "capital") is produced in specific fields. It reflects the inter-subjectively shared, taken for granted, values and discourses of a field, its *doxa*.[15] The *doxa* in turn is shaped and reproduced through the *habitus* of the people in the field. However, the fields which a person is part of may (obviously) be multiple and vary over a life span. When a person enters a new field whose *doxa* is not yet reflected in the *habitus*, behaviour is bound to miss the many taken for granted, unwritten rules of that field and consequently appear clumsy and ill adjusted, a "Don Quichotte condition" or *hysterisis*[16] (Fowler 2000a: 13). Overtime, *hysterisis* may subside as the *doxa* is incorporated into the *habitus* of the person and behaviour accordingly becomes less awkward (but not necessarily more effective in terms of producing power) in relation to the field. Alternatively, the logic of the field might evolve so that the behaviour no longer is at odds with its logic. In international relations diplomats from revolutionary states (Russia, Iran or China) as well as NGOs driving international standards of e.g. corruption and money laundering have certainly been part of both kinds of processes.[17] On the one hand, they have been clumsy and out of place and have learned the rules international diplomacy. On the other hand, they have been essential drivers of change of the acceptable and taken for granted of these relations.

This leads to the third "thinking tool": Practice. The notion of practice serves to underline that when people act, that action can only be understood in terms of the broader context. As the discussion of fields and *habitus* have made clear, social inter-

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[14] *Hexis* is borrowed from Aristotelean philosophy where it refers to a state (or possession) which is stable (but not static), i.e. like the bodily character of a person evolving.

[15] *Doxa* is the taken for granted and unproblematized understanding that are contrasted to those subjected to scientific analysis. Heterodoxy and Orthodoxy derive from it.

[16] *Hysteris* (according to the Oxford English Dictionary) means the lagging behind of an effect.

[17] As illustrated by Halliday (1999) or Kissinger (1994) for diplomacy (obviously in different terms) and by Coerdray (2004) and Favarel-Garrigues (2003) for corruption and anti-money laundering respectively.

action (and action tout court) is always shaped by people's dispositions (*habitus*) and these dispositions are unreflected and unarticulated to a large extent. Moreover, as the discussion of field underlined, their interaction will be de-limited by their resources (capital) which define their effective possibilities to act. This bring us to the "formula" used to define practice namely: [(*habitus*) (capital)] + field = practice (Bourdieu 1979: 112).

Thinking of in terms of practices is a way of underscoring the significance of the inter-subjectively produced meaning (of capital and *doxa*) that forms action. Even more strongly, FIHP scholars would claim that action can neither be adequately understood nor described unless it is thought as practice. If one tries, the dispositions and positions that form action either have to be taken for granted or explained away as irrational and deviant. Taking them for granted works if there happens to be a coincidence between the assumptions about intention and rationality of the researcher and the dispositions/ position of the person researched. This may be the case as for example in realist IR when the assumptions made by researchers may correspond to the assumption of the people whose practices are studied. But a coincidence is not the same as an explanation or an understanding. As soon as there is a discrepancy between the two – as for example in the case of the behaviour of president Wilson – explanations at the individual level are reduced to either to declaring the behaviour "irrational" or to look for an outside constraint (e.g. intense lobbying) for an explanation. Lacking is an understanding of what the logic and *habitus* of the field is, what kind of variation it allows for, how (President Wilson's) behaviour can be understood and how it affects the field (if at all). In addition to this, looking at the individual level obfuscates the power implications of the structuring effects that weigh on action. The responsibility for failures is placed on the individual in disregard of the dispositions and field logics which result in a practice. Analysis becomes uncritical, conservative and incapable of identifying sources of (emancipatory) change (for a discussion Bourdieu 1994).

In IR, Ashley (who is one of the best known and also earliest users of a FIHP framework in IR) has made exactly these points by analysing IR as a practice (e.g 1989). He argues that the community that exists on the international level is the community of realists, those who deny that in international anarchy there is a community (this is a good paradox to depart from). He turns realism (with its emphasis on sovereignty) from an external theory of IR into a *doxa* in the field of international relations. He shows that how international diplomacy (the main practice in the field) is framed in terms of this *doxa* which it upholds and which blocks the possibility to imagine change, in the article referred to here change in the direction of "global governance". Ashley does not contest that much of international diplomacy makes sense in realist terms. The point is that this is so because there is a coincidence between the expectations realism produces and the *doxa* of diplomats. The uncritical acceptance and

lack of analysis of this coincidence is precisely what blocks political imagination in the field.

As the [(*habitus*) (capital)] + field = practice formula shows, the central building blocks of the FIHP are closely intertwined and work together as distinct parts of a thinking system about the social world with the intent of capturing symbolic power and violence. Figure 1 (intended to summarize the argument in *Distinction*) and figure 2 (intended to summarize the argument in *Le Sense Pratique)* both placed at the end of the paper, illustrate their relationship. This does (evidently) not entail that all FIHP studies always rely on the three thinking tools to the same extent. Depending on interests, ambitions and context researchers will make more use of one tool than the other two. Ashely for example makes no use at all of the *habitus* in his application to IR hence skipping the link through the agent level (and the micro-sociological part of most FIHP analysis). Inversely, in Guilhot's analysis of the stabilization of neo-liberalism in Central and Eastern Europe through the CEU no place is given to practices. He uses agent level *habitus* and positions of key personalities in their fields (Guilhot 2004). This personalized and sometimes partial appropriation can only be welcomed by an approach which commends an irreverent use of theory, a "thinking with a thinker against that thinker, and a reactivation of classical sociological concepts to make these "function practically" in "new acts of intellectual production". It is also indicative of the contextual and varied operationalization of the thinking tools just introduced. Figure 1 and 2 here.

3. Contextual Operationalizations

With the three thinking tools just introduced at hand it is possible to analyse (almost?) any question about symbolic power and violence in (almost?) any social context. In that sense this is a parsimonious approach. However, this raises the obvious question about what kind of guides to operationalization the approach provides. The answer is that it does not and cannot – if it is to remain consistent with itself – provide firm guidelines for what exactly should be studied, what kind of evidence is relevant and in what kind of quantities for a study. To be consistent with itself, it has to remain firm on the view that the answer to these questions is contextual and question related. This contextual understanding of operationalization is an explicitly argued and defended methodological choice. The obvious correlate is that the key methodological issues facing researchers are issues relating to how to operationalize the central thinking tools in their own context. This section will elaborate these points.

What should researchers look at exactly when they operationalize the thinking tools? As underlined above, the thinking tools have been used to look things as diverse

as the artistic production, the state, the international law on war, the educational elites in Brazil, the family, the suburbs of Paris and the internationalizaiton of public administration. This diversity of studies is possible because the operationalization of the thinking tools is (by intent) contextual. The thinking tools incorporate the idea that what counts as capital is field specific, that fields have their own *doxa*, that it is reflected in agent level *habitus* and that practices combine these contextually defined taken for granted knowledge and positions. To remain consistent with itself, the approach therefore has to recognise the radically contextual nature of what is important to look at. It cannot provide firm operationalization guides that say for example that "to understand the positions in a field you must look at yearly income and diplomas". This may be relevant for example for analysing power relations among economists in Brazil, it may not be so for understanding the position of NGO activists driving the global social forum or for understanding the field of private military services. The answer is that it is part of the research to establish what in a specific field counts as capital and hence defines positions (or what the *doxa* is and how that is translated into a *habitus* or relatedly how practices are developed).

A logical consequence is that there can be no firm guidlines to what kind of material is useful for the analysis. Because the context defines what is relevant, the exact evidence that needs to be mustered will vary. Depending on their exact research focus, studies include things as diverse as statistical data, biographical CV information, photographical evidence, works of art or literature, analysis of classical texts, archival research, public speeches, newspaper clippings, or interviews. The selection of evidence made in any specific study is a key (healthy and unavoidable) subject of contention. At the overarching level of discussions surrounding the approach it has produced extensive debates over whether the method is too centred on the objective material indicators (Adkins 2004; Butler 1999; Bigo 2005; Lahire 1999a) or inversely neglects the material and institutional (e.g. Boyer 2003; Callinicos 1999; Svendsen and Svendsen 2004; The Friday Morning Group 1990). For the sake of the discussion here it is less important to adjudicate that discussion than to underline that the diversity which gives rise to it, is a logical consequence of the contextual operationalization of the thinking tools. As such it also is explicitly embraced by most scholars in the approach. One of the stated ambitions of *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*[18] was to encourage this diversity by offering a fora accepting the corresponding diversity in presentational styles.

Finally, a last consequence of the contextual operationalization of the thinking tools, is that there can be no firm guidlines as to how much is enough. How many interviews, or photos, or CVs, or texts, or advertisments, or paintings have to be

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[18] Bourdieu's journal which has been a focal point for discussion of the approach.

mustered to support a specific argument is related to exactly what the focus and the scope of the research is and how much the researcher judges necessary to produce a good account.[19] There is however a tendency for scholars using the approach to make rather harsh demands for what is required to produce credible accounts. Bourdieu often sneered at work that circumvented the hard work which goes into doing empirical studies and this was one of his key points of critique of "post-structuralist" work which he saw as stopping short of this by looking only at selected texts. But also more generally among scholars using the approach this has been the tendency and one of the consequences has been to reduce the scope and ambition of the studies. As the editor of a special issue on globalization in *Actes de la Recherche* explains to the reader:

> "It is difficult, if not outright impossible, to analyse simultaneously all these plays of interests that cross each other on the international scene, except by reference to suitcase concepts such as (de)regulation or governance that function both to flag and to obscure these struggles. Contrary to these generalizing discourses about globalization [articles in the special issue, therefore] privilege descriptive analysis, which focuses on small groups of agents and practices that contribute to internationalise state knowledge" (Dezalay 2004: 26, my translation).

Although it is not a necessity of the method, those trying to operationalize the thinking tools in the FIHP hence tend to privilege relatively narrowly defined foci in order to deal with the high demands of mustering enough evidence to support their accounts. To gain analytical purchase they compensate by drawing on the cases for more general theoretical insights and conclusion. Bourdieu for example uses the case of the (narrowly defined) housing market in France to make a (very general and theoretical point) about the significance of social structures for the operation of an economy (Bourdieu 2000a; Leander 2001).

The broader implication of the contextual operationalization of the thinking tools is that the key methodological issues facing researchers concern how exactly to make sense of the thinking tools in the context of their own research. How do you know a field/ habitus/ practice when you see it? Two recurring examples of the challenge entailed – the difficulties of delimiting the field and of defining a relevant *habitus* – will be introduced to illustrate

A first concrete question that faces researchers trying to use the FIHP is how to draw the boundaries of the field they are studying. The "field" is a very elastic notion used to think of a considerable variety of social relations. But clearly, for an researcher

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[19] This answer is similar to the answer given to this questions in most of the other methodologies introduced in this book. It certainly is parallel to Neumann and Dunn's emphasis on contextual competence and familiarity with the key texts. The difference being of course that texts may not be the main focus here.

it matters where exactly the boundaries of the field under investigation are drawn. These boundaries will define where s/he includes and excludes in attempting to clarify *habitus* and practices. Even if fields are multiple and varied they are also finite not least in that they set the boundaries of analysis.[20] This matters practically, since drawing the lines around the field mistakenly has a cost: it distracts attention from the field which is in fact shaping symbolic power and violence in the interactions studied and may hence obscure precisely the things the analysis purports to clarify.

Any researcher engaging in the line drawing involved here is faced with two interrelated questions that have no self-evident answers. The first of these is the question of whether or not the boundaries s/he is drawing are actually the boundaries around a real existing field. Any set of social interactions and practices cannot simply be assumed to form a field, reflecting a *doxa* and producing a *habitus* and a practice. Interaction can obviously takes place even when people do not share an "understanding of the stakes at stake." This is a very concrete issue. Where should the boundaries around e.g. the fields of humanitarian NGOs be drawn? Can the field be conceived as a transnational field with its own definition of positions and its own production of *habitus*? Or is it perhaps more persuasive to think of humanitarian NGOs practices in terms of distinctive national fields of charitable organization? This points to the second and related question about boundary drawing namely how to establish that a field is "relatively autonomous" and not just part of a wider field. Fields shape and influence each other and should be studied as such. Some fields (e.g. the meta fields of education and power) shape other fields. But it is unclear where the line is crossed where social relations are so strongly shaped by other fields that they no longer form fields in their own right (The Friday Morning Group 1990: 205-6).

In traditional (undifferentiated) societies it may be possible to circumvent the question of where to draw field boundaries or at least to argue that it is of limited import (Witz 2004). A lack of differentiation makes the "homology" between fields uncomplicated as the inter-subjectively shared understandings of the rules and stakes of the game are likely to be relatively homogenous. In differentiated societies the shared understandings will be more varied and contradictory, the struggles over legitimate meaning more intense. However, at the national level the symbolic mediation between fields that takes place via the state and the educational system creates a certain degree of homogenization. Even if this does not answer the question of how to draw boundaries, it diminishes the stakes involved in boundary drawing (but heightens the importance of thinking the fields of education system and the field of the state into other fields).[21]

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[20] They are too finite for Bigo who argues that they should be conceived of in Möbius strip fashion to get away from the linearity that is implied (Bigo 2001).

[21] Indeed this emphasis on the state and the educational system is sometimes read a thinly masked form of

When the FIHP is used at the trans- / inter- national level the question of how fields interact and where the boundaries should be drawn becomes impossible to circumvent. The number and variety of fields actors may belong to is considerable. Moreover, the homology between fields cannot be assumed to be unproblematic. The question of how fields are linked to each other, dominated by each other and perhaps dissolved by each other is acutely posed. (Bigo 2005: 85 ff.).

The way these issues are dealt with in research practice is by moving backwards from practices to establish where the boundaries of the field which define them should be drawn. The consequence is that one may find very different understandings of the boundaries of a field (and correspondingly diverse analysis) of fields with the same name. Consider for example two studies analysing changes in international security. In one of the study the field is narrowly defined as involving international diplomatic circles, in the other it is broadly conceived to involve the entire gamut of security professionals (police, military and commercial networks) (Pouliot 2004; and Bigo 2005 respectively). Their analysis not only differs in content, coverage and style. They reach different conclusions about the nature of change in international security. Whereas the first study reaches the conclusion that a security community discourse has established itself as the *doxa* in international diplomacy after the end of the cold war, the second concludes that the field of (in)security has been enlarged as internal and external security professionals have merged their discourses. Part of the reason for this discrepancy is that they have worked backwards from profoundly different practices in their analysis. Although both studies purport to analyse the field of security analyse two different fields (diplomatic and security professionals).

A second recurring source of methodological concern is how to identify and work with a relevant *habitus*. The validity of the thinking tool as such has been contested on behalf of scholars interested in psychology because it makes the social world uncomfortably "automatic and closed" (Lawler 2004: 228). These critiques centre on two things. One is the simplistic and reductionist understanding of psychology. The *habitus* is assumed to structure action without the processes by which it does so being thoroughly explored and explained. The consequence is an impoverished analysis negating the role of emotions and hence the variety and specificity of social relations (e.g. in love, family, friendship, hate or enmity relations) (McNay 2004). This kind of critique nicely dovetails with the general insistence of some IR constructivists on the need to elaborate a more complete theory of agency and action, particularly by drawing links to psychology (Mercer 2005).

A more immediate challenge to scholars using the concept is the methodological difficulty of handling the variable relevance of the *habitus*. In a number of situations the

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methodological nationalism providing the FIHP with an unacknowledged Archimedean point and seriously impairs the usage of the method in international relations (Olsson 2004).

habitus produced in a field may be a poor guide to practices in that field. This may be the case for people who are in a field without having internalised its *habitus* (e.g. new entrants or amateurs) (Lahire 1999a: 34). There is an external plurality of the social world which makes the concept problematic. Second, it may be the case because individuals have an internal plurality. Since the *habitus* is shaped by an individual's participation in a variety of fieds, the way that the *habitus* of an individual in is activated and expressed in any one field is bound to vary. Moving from the *habitus* produced for a group of actors in a field to the level of individual agency and action is in other words not self-evident. Finally, since the dispositions produced in an actor may be different and even incompatible, it may prove impossible for actors to fully engage and adjust to a field. The *habitus* is all the more variable as one is analysing situations where people move in and out of fields with producing not only differing but contradictory dispositions and producing internal pluralities. This is the case for many of the areas of analysis that IR scholars are likely to deal with including for example migrations, transnational relations of different kinds (from businesses to NGOs) but also state relations. The obvious implication is that it is impossible to use the *habitus*

> "to predict the development of a social behaviour as one predicts the fall of bodies on the basis of the universal force of gravity [...] We are forced to draw the conclusion from our current knowledge of the social world that the individual is too multi-socialised and too multi-determined " (Lahire 1999b: 148-149) .

This variability and changing nature of the *habitus* is not only acknowledged but actively integrated when scholars use the FIHP thinking tools. It is referred to as something potentially positive since it is one of the analysable sources of change. It is precisely the fact that behaviour is not solely and always following a *habitus* produced in the field that enables actors to be reflexive about their own situation, engage in struggles for redefining the rules of the game of the own field and also of course the boundaries of the field as such (Bourdieu 2001). This said for the scholar engaged in field work, trying to explain social relations it remains a methodological difficulty that has to be tackled. The way this is done is again usually through the analysis by working backwards from practices, breaking into the [(*habitus*) (capital)] + field = practice formula from the practice side.

The contextual and varied operationalization of the thinking tools is not straightforward. This has escaped noone who has worked with FIHP related methods. For some, this multiple, open-ended – or more strongly – "tautological", "circular" and "spiralling" definition of central concepts has produced rejection or dismay (The Friday Morning Group 1990: 210; Lane 2000; Verdes-Leroux 2000) +**Audie's text**. However, others continue find the approach inspiring and useful. One reason is that there is a dearth of more credible and more easily applicable alternatives. Linking discourses and

an behaviour in practices is not straightforward. A second reason is that one can also see the contextual and varied operationalization as a logical (and essentially positive) aspect of a method that resists functioning as a Procrustean bed for the analysis of the social world. As Brubakers explains

> "only later [having counted more than a dozen different definitions of the *habitus*] did I come to believe that Bourdieu was not so much defining as characterizing the concept in a variety of ways in order to communicate a certain theoretical stance or posture, to designate – and inculcate – a certain sociological disposition, a certain way of looking at the world" (2004: 26).

It is the tasks of the researcher to make good use of this disposition, the thinking tools that go with it and to carry the weight (and the hard work) that comes with the methodological freedom to operationalize contextually.

4. Reflexivity and Validity

As all other methods, this one needs to answer the basic question of how it distinguishes good research from bad. What are the criteria for asserting the validity of an account? How does it anchor its knowledge? How can it judge which account is better if two accounts reach different conclusions on the same question? Since in the FIHP researchers are left relatively free in the contextual application of the method – which necessarily means that they will make different choices – this question is essential. The answer is threefold: first, arguments produced in the method just introduced accounts can be contested on entirely classical grounds, but (second) more interestingly and far more centrally, the FIHP approach has developed a "reflexive" method to justify its claims to privileged knowledge. Reflexivity plays a central role in the research practice of the approach. But more than anchoring scientific knowledge in a narrow sense, (third) reflexivity is also central for validating the social significance of the questions dealt with. Reflexive research from the FIHP perspective is of essence for developing the "realpolitik of reason" that plays an important role in pushing social change.

First, the validity of studies produced with the FIHP method can be assessed by very classical means. The operationalization of the method usually involves rather classical "data collection" such as statistical information (including panel data), life span interviews, the analysis of texts, photographic evidence, or pictures. This "data collection" can then also be criticised according to the usual standards by which one measures the collection of data. Hence, issues such as the accuracy, adequacy and relevance of the information on which a study is based becomes essential for evaluating whether the "evidence" of a study can actually support its conclusions. In this sense a study can be, banally put, wrong.

This is the case for example if people are assigned positions in a field on the

basis of information that can be shown to be mistaken or irrelevant. If for example, a scholar argues that an actor's positions in the field of international diplomacy is greatly enhanced by the cultural capital linked to the mastery of Copenhagen School concepts and the educational capital that comes with a diploma from the Political Science Department of the University of Copenhagen s/he is simply wrong. Similarly, a generalization about the *habitus* of international NGO activists based solely on the reading of a short story from John Murray's collection *A Few Short Notes on Tropical Butterflies* can be taken to task for generalizing on too thin a basis. Finally, the approach is set up to produce accounts about real world symbolic violence and power and social practices. If these can be shown to follow very different patters from those suggested in an account, it is (again banally put) wrong. These are very classical checks on the validity of a study but they deserve to be taken seriously also in the evaluation of qualitative work. Even recognizing the importance of inter-subjectively constituted meaning and the "constructed nature of social reality" one can be wrong and misguided in the analysis of these.

However, as all studies that take the role of meaning in social contexts seriously those produced using the FIHP method have to answer some tricky questions regarding the status of the observer in relation to the observed (see the introduction). Specifically, for the FIHP approach which looks at the social world as imbued with symbolic power and violence and analyses it in terms of fields, *habitus* and practice it would be inconsistent to claim that the social world of scientists was somehow a different realm where these considerations did not apply. But if they apply, it means that the field of the scientific observers has its own laws, its *doxa* and *habitus* and its own variety of strategies and struggles and practices. If this is so what is the status of the knowledge produced in this field? Is it merely reflecting internal strategies and struggles? Is it just expressing current scientific practices and taken for granted understandings? Does it address any "real" concerns of the social world? Unless one rejects the idea of privileged knowledge as such (this is the position taken by e.g. Lynch 2000; Pels 2000) there is a need for some kind of grounding and justification.

The FIHP answer is that the way to anchor knowledge is through reflexivity.[22] Reflexivity is in other words a second way of ensuring the validity of work done using FIHP methodology. Reflexivity creates an understanding of the own field, *habitus* and practices. This can form the basis for an "epistemological prudence" in the own research, i.e. caution about the way the own knowledge is produced. In the FIHP

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[22] This is not a position unique to the FIHP approach (e.g. Merton 1973). However the understanding of reflexivity and its integration into research practice to be introduced is specific to the approach. This is so central to FIHP scholars that they often refer to their approach in terms of a reflexive approach (Pinto 1998: chap. 4). Their specific brand of reflexivity "hermeneutic" or "epistemic" reflexivity has also become one of the distinguishing characteristics of the approach (Lash 1994; Maton 2003).

context, reflexivity means subjecting the own field to the same analysis one would subject any other sphere of social reality. It refers to an attempt to "objectify the objectifying subject", turning the thinking tools of sociological observation on the observer.[23] The importance of doing this explains the central place the analysis of scientific and expert "fields" hold in the work of the FIHP approach (e.g. Boltanski 1981; Bourdieu 1964, 1984, 1982b; Champagne 2005; Couldry 2004; Lebaron 1998; Milot 2003). The idea is that this kind of work should enable researchers to integrate an understanding of their own field, *habitus*, and practices into their own research, and enable them to limit its impact on the their knowledge production.

In research practice, "epistemological prudence" is used to shape research in at least three ways (Leander 2002). It is serves to sharpen reflection around the questions raised and those neglected. Understanding the practice and struggles in scientific field is necessary to check that research agendas do not exclude or marginalise essential knowledge. It is used as a check on the temptation of "collective hypocrisy" and "self-delusion" which comes with simply assuming or pretending (rather than showing) that the research agendas furthered by power relations in a scientific field and those most urgent scientifically or critically are identical.[24] Epistemological prudence also serves the analysis as such. Dissecting the *habitus* is a tool for revealing the bias entailed in looking at the world from ones own perspective and there is no other place to look at it from. Finally, epistemological prudence is important in interacting with researched. A thorough understanding of the own *habitus* equips the researcher to analyse (and possibly control) the impact of the own physical appearance, reactions, gestures, social status and use of language may have on for example interviewees (e.g Bourdieu 1993: 1389-1446).

This attempt to anchor knowledge and assert the validity of the own accounts through reflexivity and "epistemological prudence" can only be an imperfect answer to the problem of privileged knowledge. There is no view from nowhere however thorough an analysis a researcher make of the own field. Nor is there any reason to assume that the reflexive analysis can entirely unveil the *habitus* and logic of the field. Moreover, there are obvious practical limitations. A researcher engaging a study of say the

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[23] This strong sociological version differs rather radically to the "narcissistic" reflexivity created as observers highlight their own presence in a discourse (Bourdieu 2001; McLain 2002; McNay 1999; Shirato and Webb 2003). Consider for example the attempt of underlining this through imaginary "second voices" deconstructing the authority of scientific discourse (Woolgar and Ashmore 1988) or the peppering of texts with references to personal state such as "I am now sitting in a café with a red book..." (Der Derian 2001).

[24] This issue is of essential concern as the commercialisation, internationalisation of universities as well as the growing pressure for scientific knowledge to adjust to international (i.e. mainly US and UK) standards (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1998; Malissard, Gingras and Gemme 2003; Milot 2003; Crossely 2003; French 2000; Schinkel 2003).

sustainable development strategy of the World Bank cannot also include a full reflexive analysis of the own field. S/he therefore depends on pre-existence work which may never have been done. Even if it has been done, the reflexive grounding of the own argument will most probably remain unarticulated. The usual constraints of thesis, article and book writing are such that one cannot possibly include both an analysis of sustainable development strategies and its reflexive grounding in the same piece of work (for a poignant critique of the use of reflexivity in the FIHP context Monod 1999). This said, since social science research (also in IR) is a form of privileged knowledge, an imperfect attempt at anchoring this knowledge is preferable to none. This is one reason for the extensive attention the reflexive method developed in the frame of the FIHP (e.g. Lash 1994).

Finally, reflexivity ensures validity in a third way. It is used to assess the social relevance of research done within the method. The "social significance" of research is a classical criteria for evaluating social research (e.g. Ragin 1994: 23) included on all standard forms of research assessment at least in Scandinavia. By social significance, it is more often than not meant that research should be "useful" (for some group or policymaker).

This general idea is given a twist when it is taken into account that scientific practices "loop" (to use Hacking's term 1999: 105-8) back into society and reshape its reality. Categories and representations create their own social reality (as argued by most chapters in this book). For the macro-sweep presentation of this idea consider for example Foucault's account of the emergence of the modern state (Foucault 2004). For a micro-account consider for example, the role of security experts in categorising, classifying and create routine practices to think about threats which (re)shape the understanding of security and practice in the field of security (Bigo 2003; and Leander 2005). When scientific practices are acknowledged to have looping effects, we are no longer in a position to measure the social significance of research simply by looking at how results can be/are used. We are in a situation where research may shape society.

For the FIHP approach, the significance of this insight is magnified. Educational institutions are meta-fields that shape knowledge in other fields not only by producing categories but also by sanctioning careers there. For international relations praxis for example, a diploma from Harvard, Princeton, or the Fletcher School at Tuft's University is key to careers as diverse as the state department, major business corporations or in the humanitarian sector. Therefore, the representations and categories that students acquire in the process of obtaining these diplomas (and these presumably reflect research in IR) will shape these fields directly. Gellner's drastic statement adequately captures the overall position of the approach.

"At the base of the modern social order stands not the executioner but the professor. Not the guillotine, but the (aptly named) *doctorat d'état* is the main

tool and symbol of state power. The monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central than is the monopoly of legitimate violence" (1983: 34).

The pivotal role of legitimate knowledge in society makes reflexivity regarding the own research practices the only possible way of assessing its "social significance". It becomes essential to ask what kind of "looping effects" the own work has. More than this, from a FIHP perspective it is naive and irresponsible (or perhaps more banally Machiavellan) not to be reflexive about the own research practice. The *doxosophists,* purporting to produce neutral and objective knowledge and studies usually serve existing *doxa* (Poupeau and Discepolo 2005: 66; also Bigo 2005). But more than this, they are bound to produce unrealistic accounts of a fantasy world where symbolic power and violence is either absent generally or simply assumed to be absent in the world of the researcher. Inversely, reflexively grounded research can have profound social significance by denaturalizing, historizing and unmasking taken for granted understandings and their power implications. It can reveal the interested aspect of the seemingly disinterested. It can be used to "excavate the social conditions of possibility" in real world contexts. Therefore a "Realpolitik of Reason" is both the key to socially significant research and an important part of real world politics.

Conclusion

Thinking about International Relations as Fields, *Habitu*s and Practices is helpful for those who want to show the link between social practices and discourses and especially for those who want to place questions of power and of change in specific contexts at the heart of their analysis. As this paper has shown it is helpful because it provides a limited set of general thinking tools that makes it possible to answer these questions in any social context since they are designed precisely to account for differences in context. It is also useful in that it highlights the centrality of reflexive work for the social sciences (not only this particular approach). It gives researchers the reflexive tools necessary not only to analyse the "Realpolitik" of international relations or of their own fields but to consciously pursue a "Realpolitik of Reason" both inside and outside their university institutions. Finally, thinking of IR as Fields, *Habitu*s and Practices underlines the absurdity of the standard text book presentation where thinking about IR is subjected to a division of labour: the realists we are told think about the brute, security dominated material world. Assorted liberals, constructivists and post-modernists think about (mostly nice) ideas, community and identity (e.g. Jackson and Sørensen 2003) +**COCO symposium**. The FIHP approach underlines that nice ideas are often brutish and that material power is always imbued with and based on symbolic meaning. It provides tools for those who want to work refusing this unrealistic division of labour.

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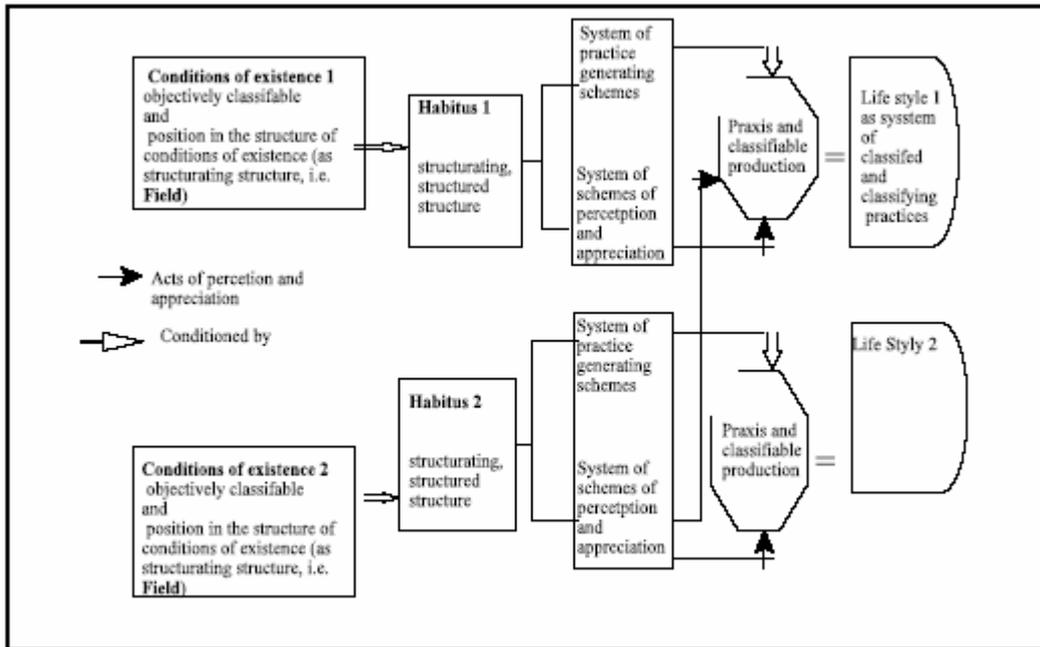
Figure 1 Source: Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction: critique du jugement sociale*, Paris: les éditions de minuit, 1979, p. 191

Structure
- set of objective regularities (92/93)
- product of collective history (96)

Previous conditions for the production of

present conditions for effecting the habitus

Habitus – Le Sens Pratique
- functions like the materialisation of collective memory
- guarantees the active presence of past experiences, stored in all organisms as schemes for perception and action (91)
- 'unconscious' link between two states of the world = the forgetting of history that history produces = the embodied history (94)
- condition for the concertation of practices and for the practices of concertation (98)

capacity of infinite, yet limited generation of

schemes of thought, perceptions, acquired repertoires of actions
– lasting dispositions for recognising and effecting the field's immanent expectations

Practices
- orchestration without conductor (99)
- world of 'common sense' when habitus shared (97)

Open and non-mechanical reproduction.
Circular only in those cases where the conditions of the production and the enactment of the habitus are similar or homologous

strategy without strategic calculus, objective sense without subjective intention (104) = strategy of avoidance through the choice of the 'milieu' (102)
Process of selective reinterpretation
– Practices are rewarded because objectively adjusted to the logic of the field

Field

1