

Faksimil

Donald Broady, *Exploring Cultural Fields*
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Exploring Cultural Fields

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This text is introductory in scope and also intended to present some literature references and graphs that will be referred to in the talk. The talk itself will put more emphasis on recent developments and problems in the research on cultural fields.

With reference to the theme of this conference, “Culture and education,” I have been assigned with the task to reflect on the contributions emanating from one of today’s most important and influential research traditions in this area: the school of Pierre Bourdieu and his collaborators.

I will dwell upon one of Bourdieu’s key concepts: the concept of field, and especially cultural field.

One obvious reason for this choice of topic is the mere magnitude — as well as the increasing diversity regarding the objects and the raising standards both in methodological accuracy and empirical basis — of the research on cultural and other fields (in Bourdieu’s sense) undertaken in many countries and within many disciplines.

In France the third generation of the Bourdieu school is now entering the scene. I use the expression “third generation” in a rather literal manner, meaning those who are now in their thirties and beginning to complete doctoral theses supervised by those who ten and twenty years ago wrote their theses supervised by Bourdieu himself. To mention the most recent example, Gisèle Sapiro belongs to this third generation (even if Bourdieu happened to be the supervisor in this case). Her thesis, the subject of which is writers and literary academies in France during and immediately after the German occupation, was defended in December 1994, and I would like to recommend it as a most careful and painstaking demonstration on how the study of cultural fields are undertaken today (G. Sapiro, *Complicités et anathèmes en temps de crise : modes de survie du champ littéraire et de ses institutions, 1940—1953. Académie française, Académie Goncourt, Comité national des écrivains*, unpubl. diss., École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, déc. 1994).

Also in the Nordic countries there is an amazing increase in the number of studies on fields animated by the Bourdieu tradition. To merely mention some ongoing or recently accomplished doctoral thesis or post-doctoral works, there are many educational studies (on school subjects, teachers, headmasters etc.), but also studies on sports (the Danish field of cycle sport, soccer in

Sweden, boxing in Sweden); on heterodox liberation theology within the religious field of the catholic church; on the historic genesis of the competition field of the publishing houses; on the artistic field (for example one thesis in progress on how to become a successful artist, and another on the field of art museums and galleries); on the literary field and its forerunners, spreading from the 18th century to today's literature (studies in several cases undertaken by feminist historians of literature who evidently have found something useful in Bourdieu); on the Swedish musical field (at least four doctoral theses), on the Norwegian field of rock music policy; on the Finnish academic élite, on Arabic academic élites; on avant-garde heterodox positions within the theatre field; on the culture of shopkeeping as a field, on the fields of housing, architecture and city planning; on nursing and healthcare (several theses both in Sweden and, thanks to Staf Callewaert, in Denmark), on the establishment of new academic subjects as nursing in Norway, on school health care, on the emergence of nursing as a professional occupational field; there is even a partly Bourdieu-inspired thesis in archaeology on the 9th century Viking society of Birka.

1. Early works on culture and education

First, however, some words on how it all begun, fifteen years before the publication of any studies on fields. From the very beginning, in the early sixties when Bourdieu inaugurated his sociological studies of contemporary French society, the connections between culture on one hand and education on the other was at the heart of his endeavours.

Among educationalists his work *Les héritiers* (The Inheritors), 1964, immediately became famous and in some circles disreputable. It was very much read among the youngster who a few years later were to take part in the student rebellion in 1968. In fact, this very book was accused of seducing the youth into subversive action. The "inheritors" referred to in the title of the book were the liberal arts students, i.e., the legitimate heirs of French culture. Culture, in Bourdieus terminology, is thus to be understood as high culture, the authorised, legitimate, dominating culture.

The culture is, in other words, underpinning the positions of the dominating class, and culture is especially important to the "dominated fraction of the dominating class", to use Bourdieus not very elegant terminology. This cultural fraction of the dominating class is located in the upper left corner of a famous scheme, first published in Bourdieu's article "Anatomie du goût", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n° 5, octobre 1976, and reappearing in *La Distinction*, 1979 (cf. figure 1 below). Here one finds artists, writers, cultural journalists, university professors etc., i.e., the groups most well supplied with cultural capital. Secondary school teachers possess a somewhat more modest amount of cultural capital, primary school teachers even less. For everyone in the left regions — those close to high culture as well as those further down in the popular classes — goes that their possession of cultural capital is more important than their possession of economic capital. The total amount of capital increases when you move up in this social space, while the importance of the cultural capital increases and the importance of the economic capital decreases when you move from the right to the left.

One of the Bourdieu school's most decisive early contributions to social science was the emphasis of this last mentioned horizontal dimension of the social space. Many significant social relations and social struggles are underpinned by oppositions between groups that may possess the same amount of resources or capital, but different species of capital. These relations disappear if you overemphasise the vertical relations between (social group 1, 2, 3; bourgeoisie, middle classes, working class).

Still, even Bourdieu's and his collaborators main interest during the sixties and early seventies was the relations between the three main social categories: bourgeoisie, middle classes, popular classes. Therefore the cultural studies presented in "Anatomie du goût", 1976, and *La distinction*, 1979, mark the end of a period. What came next were the studies on fields.

2. Cultural capital

A short commentary to the related concepts symbolic and cultural capital. Symbolic capital may be regarded as the most fundamental concept in Pierre Bourdieu's sociology. As a compressed general definition, the following might do: symbolic capital is something that is recognised. This recognition is no individual affair but rests on the beliefs of social groups. The word recognition should be taken in a double sense, to see something for what it is, and to acknowledge the validity of it (cf. the corresponding French word *reconnaissance*). We could, thus, give a more elaborate definition, which runs: symbolic capital is something that social groups recognise as something that possesses value.

A definition of the related concept cultural capital could, as a suggestion, be: cultural capital is the dominating form of symbolic capital in modern societies, i. e. in societies where social and cultural reproduction depend on written language and the educational system.

A more loose and general way of understanding cultural capital is to treat it as the answer to the question: if you are in the position of some societal influence, and if you do not possess very much economic capital or physical power, then what do you possess?

3. Social fields

The next main invention in Bourdieu's sociology was numerous studies on social fields, published from 1975 and onwards.

Even the scheme on the social space and lifestyle was mapping a specific type of field, namely a "consumption field", to use Bourdieu's terminology. Studies of this kind, using correspondence analysis, has since then been undertaken in many countries. Figure 2 illustrates the outcome of a small Swedish study on a consumption field. The data are taken from a questionnaire to four groups of students in Stockholm: at the prestigious School of commerce <Handelshögskolan>, Economics at the University, School of journalism, and the education of cultural mediators <Kulturvetarlinjen>.

A consumption field is one among many other types of fields. A very general definition of field might be: a system of relations between positions. A social field in Bourdieu's sense is, to put it short, constituted when there is something specific that is at stake in the struggles and exchanges within a demarcated group of specialised individuals and institutions. In a production field something is produced: values and standards, specialists, works, achievements etc. In a cultural production field the production concerns works of art, literature, science, religion.

Take a scientific production field as an example. It is populated by researchers, academic teachers, administrators at the research councils and foundations, specialised journalists etc. To reside, "feel at home" and survive within this field, one must have gained certain dispositions, that is one must be prepared in a specific way. If the newcomer is to be recognised as, let's say a researcher in sociology or history ("recognised" in two senses of the word: identified as a researcher and consecrated, i. e. granted the authority to pass judgement on matters of scientific methods, etc.), it is demanded that he or she has made specific investments. He must have undertaken specific kinds of readings, and exhibited familiarity with specific research methodology and the specific genre demands of the oral and written discourse of his discipline

or sub-discipline. He must have made acquaintance with certain people and intellectual milieus. In short, he must have accumulated a sufficient amount of the species of symbolic capital which is specific to the field. He must have acquired enough knowledge about past and current struggles within the field — struggles that have constituted the field — to be capable of distinguishing the legitimate and applicable themes of discussion, the appropriate styles of talking on science and reading and writing scientific texts. To procure for oneself this kind of judgement or “taste” is a hard and lengthy investment work.

The same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for any field of cultural production (literature, art, journalism etc.). A field in Bourdieu's sense exists where people are struggling on something they are sharing, where something specific is at stake (e. g., how to write and judge on literature) where specific investments and entrance-money are exacted from new pretenders, where there are specific rules of the game, specific stakes, rewards, signs of authority, etc. To investigate different fields implies investigating the accumulation, distribution and exchange of symbolic capital of corresponding different nature.

A field exists only if it is relatively autonomous, that is if the characteristics mentioned are specific to that field. This implies that one might sometimes not, until after a rather extensive collection of data on the agents and institutions involved, be sure of if the domain under study should be analysed as a field in Bourdieu's sense, or as composed of several different fields, or as a sub-domain inside a larger field.

Maybe even more important than the specific content of this investment is that the newcomer demonstrates a general *will* to invest, and that he professes himself to the specific belief which underpin the struggles inside the field. This belief, which unite all the participants and render the possibility to continue the struggles despite (or rather, by means of) their disagreements, is the belief in the importance and legitimacy of participating in the struggles on how to undertake science and how to judge scientific achievements. The most scandalous offence against decorum would not be that someone denied the value of this or that work or this or that scientist or artist; the most scandalous offence would be to say that all these struggles on the value of science or art are not worth while.

A field is, of course, also characterised by specific forms of symbolic or economic profit and reward. A successful scholar in a certain discipline gains signs of recognition, consecration and authority that are specific to his field, as well as grants, publishing possibilities, disciples and followers, etc.

An important criteria for the existence of a (relatively) autonomous field is that it possesses it's own consecrations instances. If politicians or company managers are able to judge on the value of scientific or artistic achievements, or on the value of scholars or artists, then the scientific or artistic field suffers from a lack of autonomy.

Another important criteria distinguishing an autonomous field is its capacity to transform whatever that is introduced from outside. An example, analysed in the introductory chapter of Bourdieu's *La noblesse d'État*, 1989 (originally published in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n° 3, 1975), is the Parisian philosophy teacher who transforms her students' social and cultural characteristics into judgements on their intelligence and endowments: the postal office employee's daughter is judged to be “vulgar” and “servile” or “cringing”, and at the other end of the scale the daughters of university professors in law and philosophy are judged to be “interested”, “cultivated” and blessed with “philosophical *esprit*”. Such a transformational ability (there are empirical data behind this analysis) shows that the French educational system possesses a certain degree of autonomy.

4. Genesis

A few words on the genesis of the concept. Bourdieu's concept of field, or to be more specific, social field, struggle field, or field of competition, was introduced in print for the first time in 1966. Bourdieu's first published attempt to use the field concept was "Champ intellectuel et projet créateur", *Les temps modernes*, n° 246, novembre 1966, pp. 865—906. In this early shaping the concept still is a hybrid between structuralism and interactionism.

One of the main sources of inspiration for Bourdieu's concept field seem to be found in Max Weber's sociology of religion, principally the chapter "Typen Religiöser Vergemeinschaftung" in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Here you find the analysis of the relations between the types priest, prophet, and sorcerer, and how they relate to the laity.

To be more precise, Bourdieu undertook two transformations of the Weberian scheme. [1] First, a rupture in a so to speak more "interactionist" direction. Instead of, as Weber, ascribing properties to the "types" priest, prophet, and sorcerer, he preferred to raise the question of how they relate to each other: how does the priest relate to the prophet and to the sorcerer, how does the prophet relate to the priest and to the sorcerer, etc. [2] Later on, in print in two articles published in 1971, Bourdieu undertook a more structuralist or relationalist direction: he aimed at constructing the religious field as a system of relations between positions, a system which sort of exists beforehand, before the individual enters. In this perspective, it is not sufficient to say that there is an interaction. The field imposes itself, as a structure, with dominating and dominated poles, forces etc., which as in the case of an electromagnetic field imposes its effects on whatever is putted into it.

At this time, at the university of Lille during the first half of the sixties, Bourdieu gave during a couple of years lectures on this Weberian text, and during the sixties and seventies he led a seminar on the artistic field at École Normale supérieure, rue d'Ulm. The field concept seems to have arisen when Bourdieu begun to discover the possibility to transpose (and reinterpret) Weber's well known catalogue of religious agents — priest, sorcerer, prophet, and their respective relations to the laity — to another area, art and literature.

Another important source of influence was undoubtedly Marx' and Engels' concept of "relative autonomy", likewise a recurring topic at Bourdieu's seminars at École normale supérieure (before it was made a main theoretical issue by the Althusserians). A third source was contemporary anthropology: Radcliffe-Brown, Edmund Leach (whose enterprise was close to Bourdieu's own), and the French structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Concerning the relation to structuralism in general and Lévi-Strauss in particular, Bourdieu's ambition could be characterised as an attempt to expand the structuralist manner of analysing relations between representations into investigations including relations between social positions — at that time an invention. Bourdieu's conception of fields aimed at grasping the "relative autonomy" of the world of representations and symbolic systems, and the connections to the world of practices and social positions.

I guess, though, that the most important source of inspiration was the field notion as it is treated within physics (electromagnetic field, gravitation field etc.).

5. Uses

There are different ways of using the field concept.

Studies of consumption fields are already mentioned. Another very intuitive way is to study the geographic space in order to find some kind of social order. Figure 3 reproduces Bourdieu's map over both the itineraries (at one and the same time social and geographic) of some main

characters in Gustave Flaubert's novel *L'Éducation sentimentale. Histoire d'un jeune homme*, 1869.

Another way is to construct a system of relations between institutions. Figure 4 shows the field of higher educational institutions in France. Here the distinguishing property is the socio-economic origin of the student population at the different institutions. Figure 5 presents the outcome of a similar Swedish study.

Most important, though, is the construction of social fields where human beings (groups or individuals) are occupying the positions. The last four pages below illustrate this type of research. Figures 6 and 7 are reproduced from *Homo academicus*, 1984, Bourdieu's study of the Parisian field of higher education of the late sixties. Finally, figures 8 and 9 are taken from *Les règles de l'art*, 1992, Bourdieu's so far most thorough and accomplished demonstration of how to analyse cultural fields. (Cf. my article in *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift*, nr 1 1994, where I suggested a few different readings of this book.)

One of the most fruitful and for the moment most expansive methods for exploring cultural fields is, no doubt, what the French call *prosopographie*. This is a kind of systematic collective biography using the same type of data for a large number of individuals. I have already mentioned Gisèle Sapiro's unpublished thesis, built on information (126 variables) on 140 writers. The master when it comes to the craft of writing prosopographies is another Bourdieu disciple, the historian Christophe Charle, who already has published half a dozen valuable books on different generations of intellectuals, authors, politicians, civil servants, scholars etc. His latest book, entitled *La République des universitaires 1870—1940*, Seuil, Paris 1994, is of considerable interest to educationalists.

FIGURE 3.

P. Bourdieu, *Le règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Seuil, Paris 1992, p. 69.

Le Paris de *L'Éducation sentimentale*

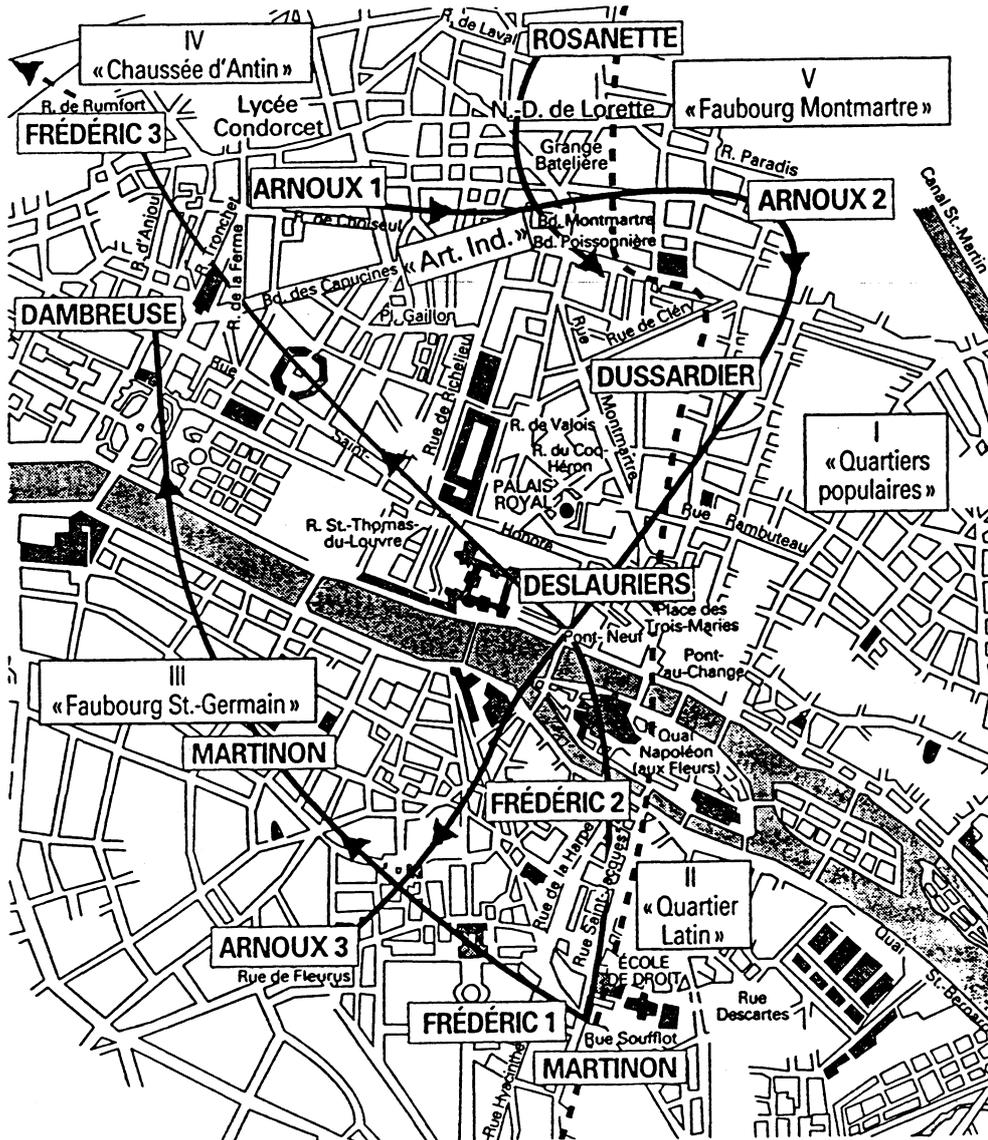


FIGURE 4.

P. Bourdieu, *La noblesse d'État. Grandes écoles et esprit de corps*, Minuit, Paris 1989, p. 381.

Diagramme 14
L'espace des institutions d'enseignement supérieur (n = 84)

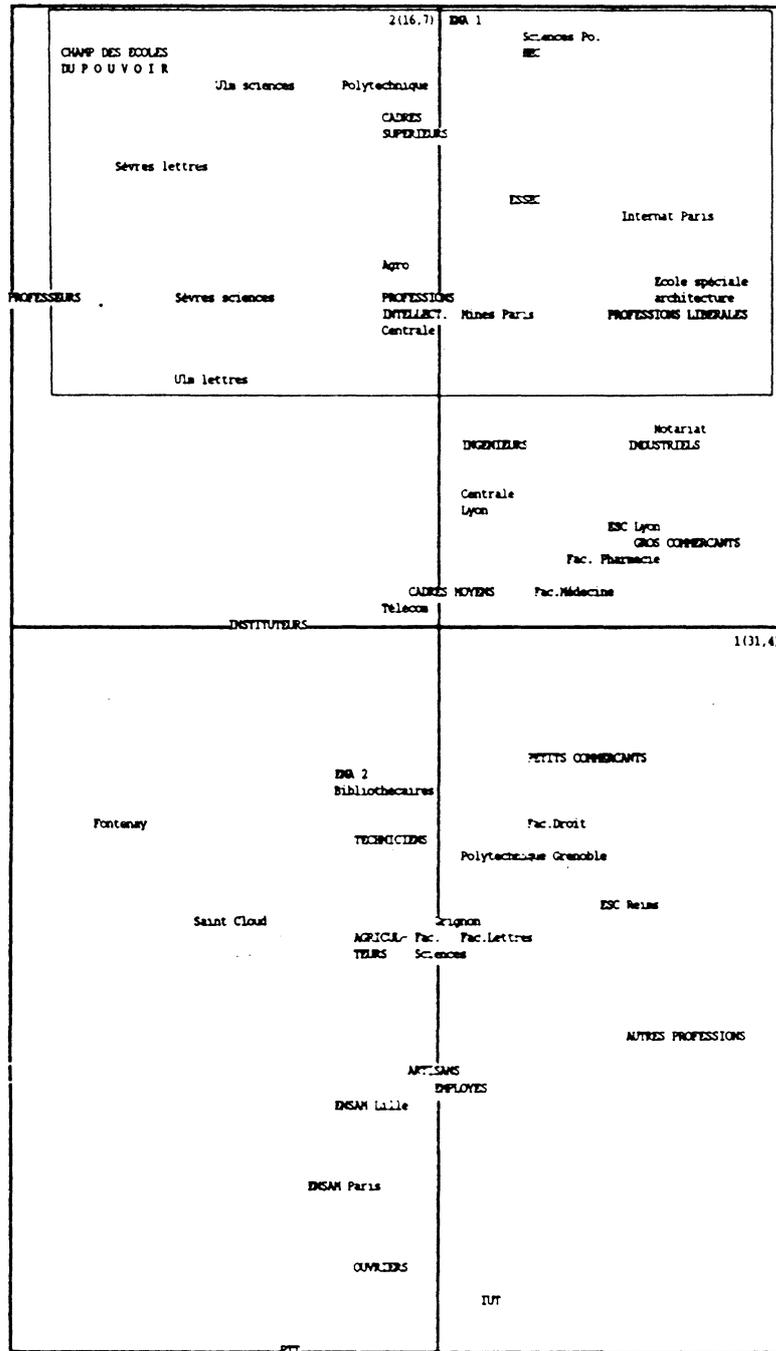


FIGURE 5.

D. Broady & M. Palme, "Le champ des formations de l'enseignement supérieur en Suède". In Monique de Saint Martin och Mihai D. Gheorghiu (éd.): *Les institutions de formation des cadres dirigeants. Étude comparée*. Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, Centre de sociologie européenne, Centre de sociologie de l'éducation et de la culture, novembre 1992, p. 9.

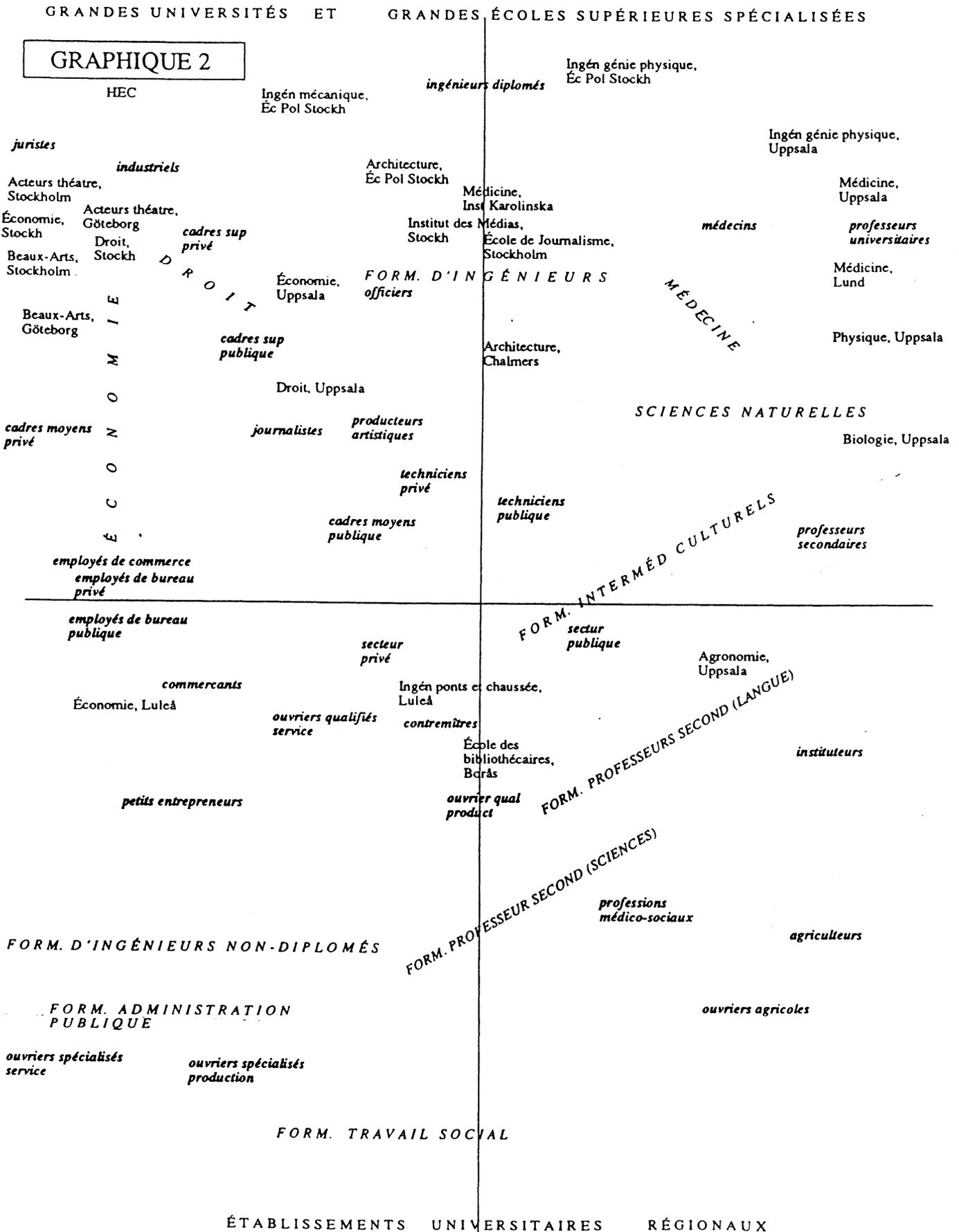


FIGURE 6.
P. Bourdieu, *Homo academicus*, Minuit, Paris 1984, p. 289.

L'espace des facultés des lettres et des sciences humaines. Analyse de correspondances : plan des premier et deuxième axes d'inertie – individus.

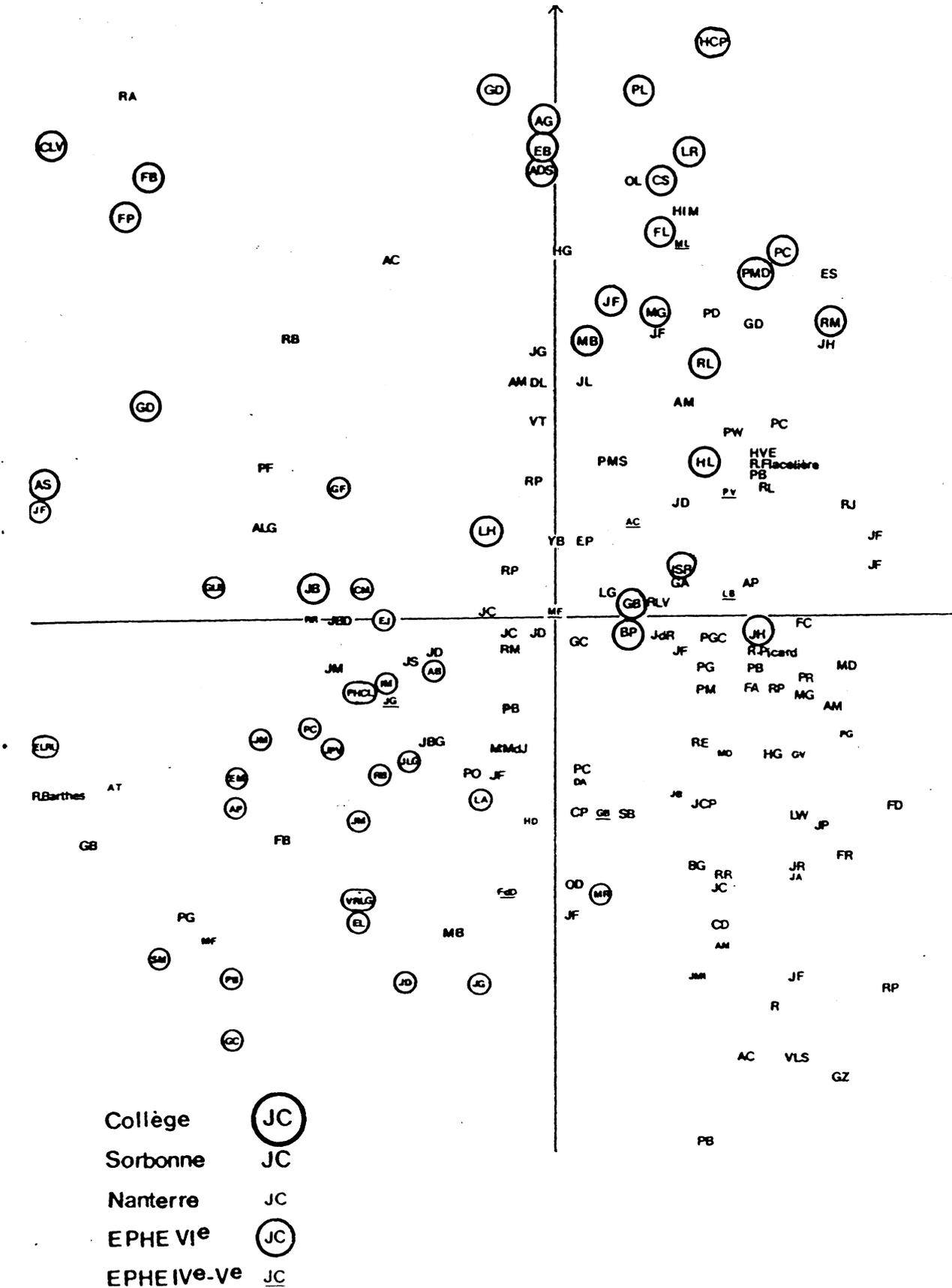
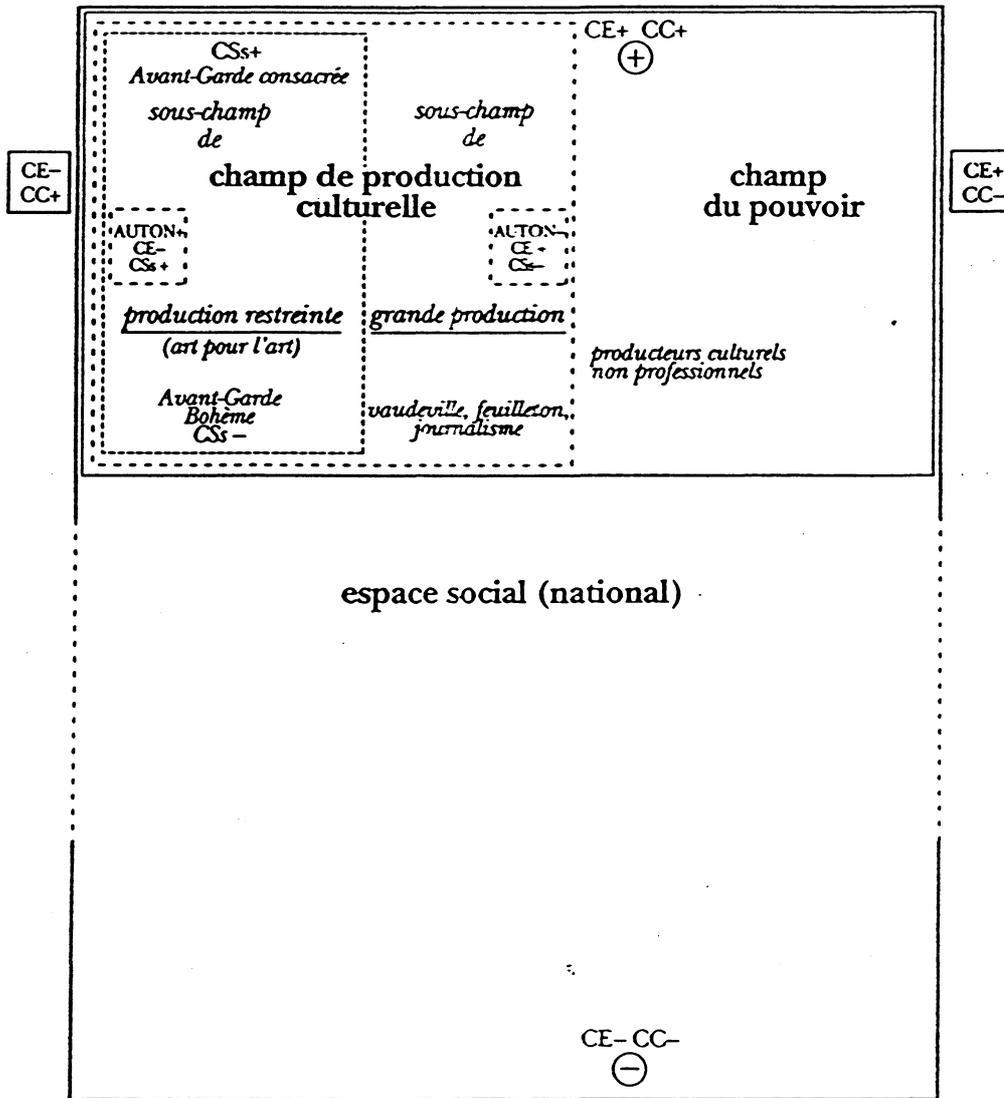


FIGURE 8.

P. Bourdieu, *Le règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Seuil, Paris 1992, p. 178

**Le champ de production culturelle
dans le champ du pouvoir et dans l'espace social**



Légende

- Espace social
- Champ du pouvoir
- - - Champ de production culturelle
- Sous-champ de production restreinte
- CE Capital économique
- CC Capital culturel
- CSs Capital symbolique spécifique
- AUTON+ Degré d'autonomie élevé
- AUTON- Degré d'autonomie faible

FIGURE 9.

P. Bourdieu, *Le règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Seuil, Paris 1992, p. 176

Le champ littéraire à la fin du XIX^e siècle (détail)

