

Denis Baranger

# The Reception of Bourdieu in Latin America and Argentina

(doi: 10.2383/27724)

Sociologica (ISSN 1971-8853)

Fascicolo 2, settembre-ottobre 2008

**Ente di afferenza:**

()

Copyright © by Società editrice il Mulino, Bologna. Tutti i diritti sono riservati.  
Per altre informazioni si veda <https://www.rivisteweb.it>

## **Licenza d'uso**

L'articolo è messo a disposizione dell'utente in licenza per uso esclusivamente privato e personale, senza scopo di lucro e senza fini direttamente o indirettamente commerciali. Salvo quanto espressamente previsto dalla licenza d'uso Rivisteweb, è fatto divieto di riprodurre, trasmettere, distribuire o altrimenti utilizzare l'articolo, per qualsiasi scopo o fine. Tutti i diritti sono riservati.

# The Reception of Bourdieu in Latin America and Argentina

by Denis Baranger

doi: 10.2383/27724

## 1. Bourdieu and Latin America

The Congress commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* (FLACSO) was held at its campus in Quito on October 30, 2007. Rafael Correa, President of Ecuador, both an economist and former professor at FLACSO, spoke on this occasion, and in his extensive speech quoted Bourdieu in an attempt to invoke an epistemological vigilance aimed at developing a social science at the service of the Latin American people, that is to say, a form of understanding which assumes the necessary *rupture* with “positivist economics” and rational choice theory [Correa 2007].

These words are consistent with the social representation of Bourdieu the scientist transformed into a militant anti-globalization activist. This image was relayed across the world as from 1995 onwards, turning Bourdieu into a public figure in Argentina with a frequent presence in the culture supplements of the main newspapers [Martínez 2007a, 26-28].

Signs of this shift had already begun to appear in previous years. In 1989, when Bourdieu encountered J.S. Coleman at a symposium the former advocated the constitution of a field of world sociology [Bourdieu 1991].<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the journal

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this bizarre coincidence, which involved the confluence of *Social Network Analysis* and the French *Analyse Factorielle des Correspondances* in an ecumenical “structural sta-

*Liber*, which originally bore the sub-title *Revue européenne des livres*, in June 1994 changed the word *européenne* to *internationale*. Yet Bourdieu never actually travelled to Latin America.

This was the context for an episode which revealed his desire to position himself in Spanish-speaking Latin America, in terms of a participative role at once political and scientific, as was frequently the case with his contributions during his last stages. In 1999, two different teleconferences were organized just six days apart, by which Bourdieu appeared symbolically to embrace Hispanic America from the Río Bravo in the north down to the Southern Cone. The first of these, “The career of the sociologist” took place on June 22 in Mexico. The second, on June 28, was organized jointly by the Universities of Córdoba and Buenos Aires in Argentina, and the Catholic University in Santiago de Chile and entitled “The sociologist and the recent economic changes in society” [Bourdieu 2000].<sup>2</sup> On both occasions, Bourdieu spoke in Spanish, even when answering questions from the audience.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.1. *Latin America and Argentina in Actes*

Up until that point, Bourdieu had paid the sub-continent little attention. If we take *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* to be the medium of expression *par excellence* of Bourdieu’s thinking, a review of the titles of the articles published between 1975 and 2008 reveals the minor importance accorded the region. Throughout its 172 issues, only 25 articles refer to Latin America, an average of one reference for every seven issues.

If we take *Actes* to be an instance of consecration, we see that the presence of Latin American authors is scarce, except for those from Brazil. In 1975 – the first year of the journal – an article authored by the Brazilian Sergio Miceli was published, but then nothing further until 1982, when one by Loyola appeared. There are ten Brazilian authors who have published articles in *Actes*, and five of which have done so on more than one occasion.

tistic,” see Baranger 2005. Steinmetz has argued that, from Bourdieu’s point of view, it would be necessary to admit the existence of both positivist and anti-positivist positions in the socio-scientific field [Steinmetz 2005, 36-37].

<sup>2</sup> The conference revisited a lecture given for the first time in Berlin on June 10, 2000 entitled “*Neoliberalismus und neue Formen der sozialen Herrschaft*.” However, the answers to the participants’ questions had the result of turning this into an original text.

<sup>3</sup> In 1999, Bourdieu was also invited to take part in a congress organized by the *Central de Trabajadores Argentinos* – CTA, rival of the traditionally Peronist CGT – but he asked Franck Poupeau to go in his stead.

TAB. 1. *Subjects and authors in 25 articles in Actes dealing with Latin America*

| Subjects     |           |          |           |          |           |
|--------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Years        | Brazil    | Peru     | Argentina | Bolivia  | Total     |
| 1975-1998    | 16        | 1        | 0         | 0        | 17        |
| 1999-2007    | 1         |          | 5         | 2        | 8         |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>17</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>5</i>  | <i>2</i> | <i>25</i> |
| Authors      |           |          |           |          |           |
| Years        | Brazil    | France   | Argentina | Bolivia  | Total     |
| 1975-1998    | 10        | 5        | 0         | 0        | 14        |
| 1999-2007    | 1         | 1        | 5         | 1        | 8         |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>6</i> | <i>5</i>  | <i>1</i> | <i>22</i> |

In the later period of the journal, a shift from Brazil to Argentina seemed to take place. If, over the first 24 years there appeared 14 articles authored by Brazilians, as from 1999 onwards, there is only one article by Miceli (which is, furthermore, about the social history of an Argentine writer, J.L. Borges), while there are five by Argentines and one by a Bolivian sociologist. There is only one Argentine – Gustavo Sorá – with two contributions published in *Actes* [Sorá 1999; Sorá 2002], as well as an article in *Liber* [Sorá 1998].

It is no coincidence that Gustavo Sorá and Federico Neiburg [Neiburg and Plotkin 2004a] had access to both the *Centre de Sociologie Européenne* (CSE) and *Actes*, coming from the *Museu Nacional* of Rio de Janeiro, the leading post-graduate teaching institution for anthropology in Brazil, where they completed their dissertations under the direction of A. García and J.S. Lopes, respectively. Another Argentine, Alicia Gutiérrez [2005] was tutored by J.C. Combessie for her double dissertation for the *Universidad de Buenos Aires* (UBA) and the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* (EHESS). Javier Auyero [2005], after training as a Bourdieusian in Argentina, undertook his dissertation in the New School for Social Research with Tilly. Lastly, Mariano Plotkin completed a doctorate in history in California. As Neiburg was already established in Brazil and Auyero is a professor at the State University of New York, only three of the Argentines who had work published in *Actes* are currently living in this country.

Publication in *Actes* tends to be associated with doctoral research undertaken in the CSE of the EHESS, but this is not a universal rule. According to the *Hyper-Bourdieu*, there were 42 dissertations directed by Bourdieu, the first of which was defended in 1971. Miceli is also the first Latin American student to receive a doctorate from the EHESS who worked under Bourdieu's guidance and defended his doctoral

thesis in 1978. He was followed by the Brazilian L. Cavalcanti in 1990. There are no other Latin Americans involved in the dissertations directed by Bourdieu.

I have only been able to identify two Argentines who followed Bourdieu's seminars with any regularity: Ricardo Costa from 1970 to 1974, and Ana Teresa Martínez from 1996 to 1999. Several interviewees have explained the non-existence of Argentine doctorate students guided by Bourdieu with the argument that Alain Touraine exercised a monopoly over this market. Married to a Chilean researcher, Touraine carried out a number of investigations in Latin America and also taught at FLACSO, at the *Universidade de São Paulo* and at the UBA, as a result of which he could count on an extensive network of contacts across the continent.<sup>4</sup> Touraine's age-old rivalry with Bourdieu is well-known – “the third-floor hyper-functionalism,” according to Touraine, an enmity further exacerbated when he was defeated by Bourdieu in the election to the *Collège de France* in 1981. At the EHESS, Touraine enjoyed greater power than Bourdieu – “the decision-maker was Touraine, because it was his people who were at *l'École*. Touraine was highly influential in the institutional decision-making process,” explains an Argentine sociologist who did not study under either man – and was better placed to receive Latin American fellowship holders and direct their dissertations.

FLACSO was founded in 1957 by UNESCO and, until 1973, from its first headquarters in Santiago de Chile, it effectively monopolized post-graduate studies in sociology and political sciences in Latin America. There is not the slightest reference to Bourdieu in this “classic” FLACSO [Franco 2007], according to the extensive volume of 627 pages in which Solari, Franco and Jutkowitz [1976] undertook to produce a state-of-the-art report about Latin American development theories.

In among the theories of development and dependence – the latter fostered by Marx and Weber – there seemed to be no room for Bourdieu's thought. Although the book mentions a dozen or so French-language authors ranging from Samir Amin to Simone Weil, including Fanon and Poulantzas, the only ones to be quoted with frequency were the Latin American specialists Bourricaud and Touraine.

<sup>4</sup> According to Touraine [1996] in an interview, “I was first sent to Chile in 1956 to set up an institute of sociological research (...) then I was invited to the University of Sao Paulo to set another one up just like the Chilean one. So, I told the professors, ‘I think this young man could be the director of the research center.’ The young man was called Fernando Henrique Cardoso and now he is the President of Brazil.”

## 2. Bourdieu's introduction to Argentina

### 2.1. *Sociology and anthropology at the UBA*

In order to analyze the way Bourdieu was received in Argentina, the exiguous and uncertain institutionalization of sociology and social anthropology as academic disciplines must be taken into account.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the periodization of the field should be adjusted to match the political history of the last half-century [Sigal 1991], such is the extent to which social sciences have been permeated by political influences, which is far greater than for example, in Brazil.

The first period spans from the creation in 1957 of the Department of Sociology at the *Facultad de Filosofía y Letras* (FFyL) at the UBA, until 1965. This was the time when scientific sociology was institutionalized according to Gino Germani's foundation project.<sup>6</sup>

Subsequently, in 1966, the military dictatorship of the *Argentine Revolution* arrived. The Junta intervened in the universities and, by dint of resignations and contracts that were not renewed, these were emptied of social scientists. Sociology research began to be developed in other research centers, mostly independent of the State, such as the *Instituto Torcuato Di Tella*, home to the Germanian *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, and moving further left, the *Centro de Investigaciones en Ciencias Sociales* (CICSO), founded in 1966. At that time, sociology was divided between the Germanians, Marxists and Peronists of the so-called *cátedras nacionales* [Rubinich 1999].

There was a fleeting inter-regnum of democracy in 1973, when the *cátedras nacionales* and left-wing Peronism achieved a degree of hegemony but this swiftly fell prey to the ultra-right wing interference exercised by the government of Isabel Martínez de Perón in July 1974,<sup>7</sup> which gave way to the military dictatorship of Videla as from 1976. Most sociology and anthropology courses were closed down, the re-

<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding the generally-accepted version that Bourdieu began as an ethnologist and then became a sociologist, in fact he never ceased to identify himself as an anthropologist, as demonstrated by the Huxley medal which he received from the Royal Anthropological Institute in 2000. Although, for the purposes of Bourdieu's work, as indeed for sociology itself, all forms of social knowledge are relevant, as observed by Abbott [2002, 6], I shall not here discuss other disciplines such as communications or education.

<sup>6</sup> It is not that sociology did not previously exist in Argentina. Blanco [2006] has related the bold efforts of Germani to install the monopoly of legitimate sociology in the face of the so-called *sociólogos de cátedra* ("teacher sociologists"), essentially essayists who eschewed empirical research but were in charge of several university departments as well as enjoying some recognition at international level.

<sup>7</sup> Alberto Ottalagano, a self-confessed fascist, was appointed Rector of the UBA. The priest Sánchez Abelenda, who was designated Dean to the FFyL, took it upon himself to exorcise the demons of Marx, Freud and Levi-Strauss.

pression was brutal in its intensity and many social scientists were forced to seek exile. Others found refuge in private centers such as the *Centro de Estudios sobre la Sociedad y el Estado* (CEDES) or the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociales sobre el Estado y la Administración* (CISEA). Finally, as from 1984 onwards, social sciences were re-instated along with the return of many from exile.

It is also worth noting the development of anthropology in Argentina at this time. Cut adrift from history as a study course, the discipline emerged with its three branches – ethnology, folklore and archaeology – in the FFyL-UBA as an independent subject in 1958, at the same time as Sociology and Psychology. But while Sociology was open to even the most recent developments, Anthropology was more of a closed book, first under the sway of the Austrian *kulturkreise* school and then of phenomenology. Thus, British social anthropology, North American cultural anthropology and French structuralism were given little space in study programs and those students interested in these branches of knowledge had to be content with a few subjects on the matter given in sociology courses.

Although Levi-Strauss was barely included in courses on anthropology, this did not mean that students were unaware of his work, as he was beginning to oust Sartre also in the Argentine intellectual field of the 1960s. There is a long tradition of the Argentine *shadow university* (at least from 1946 onwards), composed of small study groups, private institutions that have worked alongside the official ones [Myers 2005: 88] and cultural para-institutional reviews [Patiño 1999]. But the young Bourdieu, the author of *Sociologie de l'Algérie* [Bourdieu 1958] and other ethnological works, was not then eligible for consideration as a theorist, nor even as a specialist in Algeria, as North Africa was not viewed as a cultural area of particular interest for the Anthropology course of the UBA.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.2. *The first translations of Bourdieu*

Just after its launch in Mexico, the publishing house Siglo XXI translated the famous issue of the *Les temps modernes* entitled *Problemas del estructuralismo* which includes “Campo intelectual y proyecto creador” [Bourdieu 1967], its first article translated into Spanish. This, however, apparently had no great repercussion among the sociologists, who were more interested in Godelier’s contribution on “Structure and contradiction in *The Capital*” in the same volume. Up until this point Bourdieu

<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, towards the beginning of the 1970s, the anthropologist B. Heredia [1979], originally from Córdoba, used the categories of these texts and applied them to Brazilian reality at the *Museu Nacional* in Rio de Janeiro.

was mostly taken for yet another structuralist, an assumption confirmed even further by the publication of his article on the sentiment of honor in Cabília [Bourdieu 1968].

Later, in a compilation produced by José Sazbón called *Estructuralismo y sociología*, the article “Condición y posición de clase” [Bourdieu 1969] appeared, which achieved greater impact, even though in the Latin American and Argentine political context (the popular uprising known as the *Cordobazo* had taken place in May) he was not only labeled a structuralist – given his strong Saussure-like overtones – but also judged to be excessively “Weberian,” in other words, not sufficiently Marxist.

The first books written by Bourdieu to be distributed in Latin America were all produced in collaboration with J.C. Passeron.<sup>9</sup> The first was a Spanish edition of *Los estudiantes y la cultura* [Bourdieu and Passeron 1968], which had little impact. On the other hand, *La reproducción* arrived in its translated version in 1977 when enthusiasm for Althusser was on the wane, and, perhaps somewhat unfairly,<sup>10</sup> the work tended to be associated with that particular current of thought.

However, in an earlier stage of the field, the book *Le métier de sociologue* [Bourdieu et al. 1969],<sup>11</sup> thanks largely to its clearly Bachelardian thrust and to the fact that it included an excerpt by Althusser, was swiftly endowed with a certain aura by those sociologists who read it in the original,<sup>12</sup> and then in mimeographed translations.

At FLACSO-Chile in 1970, at the same time as the rise to power of Salvador Allende’s government and the *Unidad Popular*, there was a shift in the direction taken by study programs. It was Manuel Castells, recently arrived from France and still flush with Althusserianism, who commissioned the translation of Bourdieu-Passeron’s first essay “Epistemological preliminaries” in order to take the step away from a “functionalist” methodology to an “epistemological” one, including it within his lectures for his course on “Research Methods.”

Methodology courses moved away from the Lazarsfeldian analysis of variables to epistemology, and the issue of the construction of the object: “[At FLACSO-Chile] *El oficio del Sociólogo* blends with Althusser’s Generalities I, II and III.”

According to Beatriz Sarlo [1998], in 1972 José Aricó from the publishing house Siglo XXI de Argentina offered her the opportunity to translate *Le métier*, but she refused on the grounds that it was too difficult a task. The first-ever translated edition of the book would finally see the light of day in Buenos Aires with another team of

<sup>9</sup> The first work translated into Spanish was *Le déracinement*, co-authored with Abdelmalek Sayad [1965], but which was never distributed in Argentina.

<sup>10</sup> There is no reference to Althusser in *La reproducción*, but *ideology* is however widely mentioned.

<sup>11</sup> Although in Mexico and Spain, Bourdieu was known for his work related to education, in Argentina he was initially identified with epistemology as a result of *El oficio del sociólogo*, as pointed out by Martínez [2007a, 17].

<sup>12</sup> When living in Canada, Emilio De Ípola [1970] produced an early commentary on this work.



translators on December 2, 1975, with a print-run of 4,000. But this was based on the second French edition of 1973, which had been cut down by eliminating 28 out of the 73 original “Illustrative texts,” including the one of Althusser, and prefaced by a statement of anti-theoretical principles as elliptic as they were conclusive.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.3. *The Introducers of Bourdieu’s Work in Argentina*

Already by 1979 in Argentina, there was evidence of an early use of the concept of Bourdieu’s “literary field” by Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, both from the area of literary criticism and both gifted with an undeniable sociological sensitivity.<sup>14</sup> Sarlo and Altamirano, together with other left-wing activists, founded *Punto de Vista*. Labeled a “Cultural Review,” this publication by the “interior exiles” was launched in March 1978, right in the middle of the dictatorship, and was, for many years, one of the rare locus – if not the only one – for intellectual debate in Argentina. In its pages, Bourdieu rubbed shoulders with Habermas and Foucault, Williams and Hoggart, etc. In this way, Sarlo and Altamirano successfully achieved the process of reconverting militant capital into intellectual capital.

Altamirano and Sarlo [1983, 86] described the Argentine literary field as a dependent one, by which they meant that the models or principal points of reference were derived from other national fields. This feature may be applied to the intellectual field as a whole, including social sciences. It is another source of heteronomy for an intellectual field traditionally very observant of the different schools originating in Europe, and particularly in France, as seen with the structuralism of Levi-Strauss – in the extension of this within the wave of Marxism, with Althusser – and later with Lacan, Foucault and Derrida, to mention just a few of the better known *maîtres à penser*.

This is why the Argentine intellectual field cannot dispense with the inclusion of authors who, although long-established in other countries, never cease to play a role in the local field, where they are invested with a plus of symbolic capital, owed precisely to their success abroad.

This is the case with Néstor García Canclini, one of the key figures to spread the thought of Bourdieu. Trained in philosophy in Argentina, he defended in Paris a dissertation on Merleau-Ponty directed by Paul Ricoeur in 1978 and later settled in Mexico, where he is currently professor at the Department of Anthropology of the *Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana*. Several of his books have been translated

<sup>13</sup> On the subsequent editions of *Le métier*, cf. Baranger 2005 and Passeron 2004.

<sup>14</sup> On the use of Bourdieu by Altamirano and Sarlo, and more recently, of Auyero, cf. Martínez 2007b.

into English, while he himself tours the language departments of numerous North American universities.

With the arrival of democracy, García Canclini was able to return to Argentina, his reputation enhanced by a prize awarded in 1982 by the *Casa de las Americas* in Cuba, and give lectures which gave preponderance to Bourdieu's ideas. Before, he had had the editorial Nueva Imagen de Mexico publish the first translation of *Un art moyen* [Bourdieu 1965] in 1978. Later, in *Las culturas populares en el capitalismo* [Canclini 1982], the book which received the award in Cuba, there are several references to Bourdieu. In this text, when he refers to *La reproducción*, it is to the Spanish edition of 1977, and with virtually no solution of continuity, he enshrines Bourdieu's thinking within the exposition made by Althusser of the Ideological State Apparatuses [*ibidem*, 49-50]. However, there are also references to *La distinction*, published in French just three years earlier.

Most importantly, García Canclini wrote a preface to the book *Sociología y cultura* [Bourdieu 1990], a translation of *Questions de sociologie* [Bourdieu 1984], in which, with Bourdieu's agreement, three articles from the original were left out and replaced by two fundamental texts: *Leçon sur la leçon*, Bourdieu's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, and "Social space and the genesis of the classes," an article written in 1984 which covered his break from Marxism.<sup>15</sup> *Sociología y cultura* has been widely distributed in Argentina and there is general consensus that many Argentine social scientists first encountered Bourdieu's work through this book. García Canclini's "Introducción" focuses on Bourdieu's approach to analyzing culture, and ends with an accessible synthesis of the main ideas in *La distinction*, which had only just been translated in 1988, as well as being rather more difficult to read.

Much of García Canclini's writing is overcast by his preoccupation – one shared by his readers – with deciphering Bourdieu's relationship with Marxism. Far from being apologetic, his approach discusses the idea of a "legitimate culture," criticizing the lack of acknowledgement of a possible inspiration in Gramsci, and disagreeing with the interpretation of the French May in *Homo academicus*, etc. which may have contributed to his success. *Questions de sociologie* belongs to that class of books compiled on the basis of lectures, interviews and short articles, and in that sense, *Sociología y cultura* was a successfully "soft" introduction to a complex school of thought, with the added bonus of including a critique of that same school of thought, a kind of all-in package and a highly self-sufficient one at that, which, if it did not put

<sup>15</sup> This article had already been published in a magazine of the UBA [Bourdieu 1985] and been relatively widely circulated in Argentina.

paid to the desire to delve further into Bourdieu's work, was not a fail-safe incentive to do so either.

### 3. Bourdieu in current Argentine sociology and anthropology

In the opinion of several of those interviewed, whether either Argentine sociology or anthropology may be qualified as *fields* is debatable. A kind of peaceful co-existence seems to reign supreme in which, given the degree of dispersion concerning subjects, even if there were conflict, there is no real will to take this to the extreme of annihilating the other party, either theoretically or institutionally.

One sociologist explains that "there is a vast imaginary relationship with the field of sociology, and many [in the *Facultad de Ciencias Sociales* (FCS) of the UBA, where the Department of Sociology has been based since 1985] believe that they *are* sociology, but the problem is that other people don't believe that they belong to their own field, they are neither within it nor do they dispute anything (...) The field should be one of concepts, and practices, a professional one, a field of institutions and of symbolic goods in common, and they do not share this." Another interviewee, in Córdoba, was of the view that "conflict has evaporated, no-one fights with any-one else any more (...) People don't read what others write." For his part, the director of the Department of Sociology has a more temperate view: "We apply the notion of field because there are important institutions although in a situation of relative institutional weakness." Hence, the range of professional applications of the discipline ("there are many areas in which one may achieve prestige") mean that "one may be successful in different niches, unlike history or literature, in *Filo* [the FFyL-UBA] where it's kill or be killed."

In the emerging field of Argentine sociology, it cannot be said that there prevails a clear current of thought, nor great theoretical arguments. If we take social sciences to be a dependent field, one of the key reasons for division arises from the choice of the external points of reference. In this sense, there is an axis of opposing thought between French and English speakers.

In Argentina, the possibilities for truly completing one's academic career invariably involved post-graduate studies in another country. This was the case until the 1990s, due to the virtual non-existence of local courses,<sup>16</sup> and then due to the greater prestige linked with studying at well-known universities abroad. Under these conditions, bearing in mind attendant factors such as personal dispositions and other diverse circumstances, those who chose to study abroad were clearly opting for an

<sup>16</sup> A major contrast with Brazil, where they began at the end of the Sixties.

alternative – in the past there was sometimes little choice involved – which would lead to a specific composition of their scientific capital.

Among the French sociologists, Touraine and Bourdieu are the most relevant.<sup>17</sup> Touraine has also been a frequent contributor to the columns printed in Argentine newspapers, as much as, if not more so than Bourdieu, and he still contributes to this day, given that he often travels to Argentina as well as other countries in the region. But Bourdieu, in his last period, came to represent an unbeatable combination of the attributes of sociologist and intellectual.

It must be remembered that State universities in Argentina are run jointly with the students. Social sciences students, at least the activists among them, are left-wing, and Bourdieu enjoys a good standing among these as a key opposition figure to neo-liberalism,<sup>18</sup> to the point that the fact that some professors support Bourdieu allows them to accumulate scientific – this is a “difficult” writer and a complex thinker – and political benefits alike.

For many of these academics, this is the chance to valorize a certain familiarity with the French culture and language, which offers them privileged access to his work and the possibility to accumulate capital whose value can only increase inasmuch as it is vested in such a well-known author.

Thus, those who studied in France are more receptive to Bourdieu, and even those trained under Touraine’s wing can transform their cultural capital – in this case, their knowledge of the French language and field – into sociological capital.

On the other hand, many of the Argentines who received their doctorate in North America, as well as having no knowledge of French, continue to cling to a positivist epistemology,<sup>19</sup> making them little inclined to investigate Bourdieu. M. Bunge, the Argentine epistemologist settled in Montréal – whose books are published first in English and *only then* translated into Spanish – regularly visits Buenos Aires, where he derives particular pleasure from railing against psychoanalysis, which is, according to him, a *pseudoscience*. Over the last years, he examined the epistemology of social sciences in a number of texts, until he managed to get Boudon to preface one of them.

<sup>17</sup> Boudon is best known in Argentina for his work with Lazarsfeld and his efforts to diffuse it (through the French-language version later translated in Spain, of *The Language of Social Research*), and is thus not seen as a “Frenchman.” Boltanski, on the other hand, is only just now achieving a degree of fame, although early on, a working paper from his Bourdieu period of work – *Consummation médicale et rapport au corps* [Boltanski 1970] – was published in Argentina as a book [Boltanski 1975]. His fundamental work with Chiapello *El nuevo espíritu del capitalismo*, translated in Spain in 2002, is opening the way forward for him, albeit slowly.

<sup>18</sup> Touraine, on the other hand, when he appeared on a newspaper cover page declaring that “[President . . .] Menem has put Argentina back on its feet” immediately earned himself the repudiation of many from the left.

<sup>19</sup> In the case of the anthropologists, this is obviously before the post-modernist explosion.

Bunge [1999, 33] places Bourdieu squarely in the post-modernist camp without further consideration. Obviously, Bunge is not the only one to characterize Bourdieu this way which so infuriated him, obliging him to deny it constantly [Bourdieu 1992; Bourdieu 1996]: in North America, Bourdieu tends to appear as part of the post-modernist constellation, as was the case with Foucault. And in Argentina, almost as reflection of this, those who identified themselves more closely with Anglo-Saxon positivism – often due to having taken their doctorate in the US at an earlier stage – sympathize with such a definition.

A measure of the influence of Bourdieu's thought can be found by analyzing the bibliography of the syllabi for different courses from 2007-08. In 135 courses taken from the *Licenciatura en Sociología* given at the UBA, there are some that focus on one single author,<sup>20</sup> but none on Bourdieu. Texts by Bourdieu figure to a greater or lesser extent in 36 (27% of the courses), and in some of these fulfilling a merely decorative role – as if in a gesture of “cultural goodwill” – while in others they are the actual pillars of the subject. There is a certain amount of repetition between the bibliographies, with a tendency to favor those more accessible texts such as *Choses dites*, *Sociología y Cultura* or *Réponses*. There is still some notable influence of Bourdieu as an epistemologist, although lately *Comprendre* (the postface to *La misère du monde*) is complementing *El oficio del sociólogo*.

Although there are numerous Argentine social scientists who have some degree of acquaintance with Bourdieu's work, there are very few who would accept being defined as Bourdieusian, and many of them are just that by dint of being self-taught.

Among the professors at the UBA who are unanimously recognized as Bourdieusian, there is Emilio Tenti Fanfani. With a Doctorate in Political Sciences obtained in Paris in 1971, it was only when he returned to Argentina that he read *Le métier de sociologue* in the translated version produced by FLACSO which was used for a Methodology course in Mendoza. The twists of fate during his exile in Colombia as from 1976 found him giving classes for a Master's Degree in Educational Administration in Cali (“I was obliged to involve myself in educational issues” he recognizes) and teaching *La reproducción*, translating all the propositions in the first part. In 1984, he moved to Mexico as a specialist in research into education [Tenti Fanfani 1984]. Finally, back in Argentina, he continued academic work in this area [Tenti Fanfani 1999] as well as working for international educational organizations.

Ricardo Sidicaro, also of Tenti's generation, was working at the UBA at the beginning of the Seventies with another Argentine sociologist trained by Touraine.

<sup>20</sup> They are about Marx (three courses), Weber (two), Durkheim, Simmel, Foucault, and Luhmann (one course each).

When he arrived in Paris as an exile in 1975, he bore with him a letter to Poulantzas and another to Touraine, who was to direct his thesis [Sidicaro 2002]. Back at the *Facultad de Ciencias Sociales*, he was seen as a follower of Bourdieu, perhaps because he included in his reading list *Los estudiantes y la cultura*: “We included this text twenty years ago in *Sociología general* and it is still there as a totem of sorts: in terms of numbers of readers, it is Bourdieu’s most widely-read work.”<sup>21</sup>

Sidicaro, although he took part in the Buenos Aires teleconference in 1999, is far from seeing himself as a Bourdieusian: “Bourdieu is finding that his theories are no longer applicable in this second cycle of modernity. He is the last thinker of the structured society, and when this collapses, he no longer knows what to say.”

Lucas Rubinich [1999], another participant in the teleconference, belongs to a later generation. He studied sociology during the last dictatorship and began studying Bourdieu first working under Sarlo at the CEDES, and then later when working with Sidicaro on the latter’s return. Rubinich directed Auyero when he was just starting out, and now edits *Apuntes de investigación*, a journal which has printed articles by Bourdieu, Wacquant and Auyero.

In the syllabi included in the *Licenciatura en Antropología* of the UBA, Bourdieu’s influence is less notorious than in sociology. Here, however, the theme of the “construction of the object” has become commonplace in the ethnographic methodology manuals [Guber 1991, 2001].

In social anthropology, the influence of Bourdieu is often brought by anthropologists trained in the *Museu Nacional* in Rio de Janeiro. This is the case with Neiburg, who, after receiving his doctorate in 1993, continued in Rio as a professor at the *Museu* doing research into Argentina. In Neiburg’s work, his perspective is typically Bourdieusian, about “reflecting on the constitutive relationship between the ‘representation of reality’ and ‘reality itself’” [Neiburg 1998, 16].

Outside the UBA, Bourdieusianism reaches out across the vast expanse of Argentina. In the city of Córdoba, it was Costa who, on his return from Paris in 1975, started to teach Bourdieu at the University. “I cannot deny that I, fundamentally, think on the basis of the training I have received during four years at Bourdieu’s seminary,” says Costa, who nonetheless, considers himself to be heterodox. Recently [Costa 2006], he argued that there was an inconsistency between the logic of the theory of practices based on the determination of *habitus* by position, and the proposals for the mechanism of change made by Bourdieu as an intellectual in the Nineties on the basis of conversions which enable a new perspective.

<sup>21</sup> Sidicaro promoted a new translation of this work in Siglo XXI Argentina edited in 2003 under the original title of *Los herederos*.

Gutiérrez came across Bourdieu initially as a student working with Costa, but she shortly produced a successful book in which she systematized Bourdieu's main concepts [Gutiérrez 1994] and went on to give postgraduate courses at various universities.<sup>22</sup> Gutiérrez is the only Latin American included as a foreign member of the CSE in Latin America and played a vital role in setting up the teleconference. As well as having translated many of Bourdieu's texts, Gutiérrez studies reproduction strategies among the urban poor [2004], working more recently with followers of Bourdieu from Spain.

Facundo Ortega is also in Córdoba, a philosopher by training, who had already read *La maison kabyle* in 1970 and by 1974 was teaching *Le métier de sociologue* using an home-made translation at the Department of Anthropology in Salta. Exiled in Paris, he began his urban anthropology dissertation with Castells in 1976 and finished it in 1979 with A. Meister, working on a sample of 1,200 interviews carried out by Touraine in Argentina. From Husserl, Ortega interpreted that "habitus is temporality" and is currently studying the careers of university students to see how their perspectives of the past and the future become altered over time.

Some believe that it is in the Master's Degree of Social Anthropology created in Córdoba in 2001 where a greater influence of Bourdieu is to be found, linked to Sorá [2003; 2004]. Closely related to Brazil and to the CSE, Sorá nonetheless finds little room in Argentine anthropology to develop his line of investigation.

The first Department of Social Anthropology to be set up in this country is in Misiones, where the first Postgraduate Program in Social Anthropology has been on offer since 1995. The department has a very pluralist approach, in which Bourdieu is present but by no means predominates.

In Santiago del Estero we must mention Martínez, the author of a book [Martínez 2007b] on the sociology of Bourdieu in which she examines his philosophical roots.<sup>23</sup> She finished her philosophy studies in Tucumán [Martínez 1991] and in 1995 traveled to Paris to the *Institut Catholique*, where her tutor was J. Ducatez, a former student of Bourdieu's. Martínez is very active in postgraduate study courses in the universities in the North West of Argentina and is currently researching politics and religion in Santiago del Estero.

Finally, there is Fernanda Beigel in Mendoza, brought up in the USA and lacking any contact with French culture, whose case is somewhat atypical. She graduated in 1993 and received her doctorate in sociology in Mendoza in 2002, finding

<sup>22</sup> This book was highly praised by Bourdieu and published in two other publishing houses, in Argentina and in Spain.

<sup>23</sup> Bourdieu read her doctoral dissertation *De la pesanteur de l'air: l'habitus chez Pierre Bourdieu*, and wrote in his commentary: *Très beau titre...*

herself obliged to study Bourdieu in 1999 when working on the aesthetic-political avant-garde movement of Mariátegui [Beigel 2003]. Thanks to the Bernard Houssay Award, she was able to do a post-doctorate at the EHESS in 2003-2004, where she met G. Sapiro and linked up with the CSE. She is currently heading up a team of young people researching the field of the theories on the dependence of Chile circa 1970 [Beigel 2006].

Thus we can see that in Argentina, contributions from Bourdieu's point of view have mostly been made in the areas of the study of the reproductive strategies of the urban and rural poor, culture and political clientelism [Auyero 1997], ideology and the intellectual field [Neiburg 1998; Neiburg and Plotkin 2004b].

In his last years, Bourdieu had begun to focus his interest on the international circulation of ideas. This seems to be the most consistently developed theme in Argentina, where a circuit has been set up, closely related with G. Sapiro from the CSE, involving young researchers from Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Mendoza, which often welcomes Miceli from Sao Paulo.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Texts which circulate out of context lead to colossal misunderstandings, Bourdieu used to say [Bourdieu 2002, 4]. Thus it was that in Argentina, he was first identified as a structuralist and then as an Althusserianist, before opening up a path in the Eighties, propelled, circumstantially, by cultural studies. There is nothing resembling a Bourdieusian school in Argentina, nor a center in which his thought may be considered hegemonic. It seems more like a tenuous network, whose nodes are none too numerous, and between which communications are not always fluid.

It is worth asking whether a Bourdieusian school could exist, beyond the specificities of the Argentine case. On the one hand, it is clear that Bourdieu drew inspiration from a wealth of different sources, and that the entire thrust of his teaching points to a living theory whose value lies in its application rather than in itself. This means that the mere appropriation-repetition of his concepts and proposals in the hands of disciples might be judged as a distortion of his legacy: "It seems a shame to work on Bourdieu purely from the teaching angle, which totally deforms him," was the opinion of one interviewee. Nonetheless, Bourdieu was also concerned with the spread of knowledge created on the basis of his theory, without which, as he liked to say, paraphrasing Durkheim, "sociology does not deserve so much as a single hour of one's time." In this conception of sociology as a battlefield, Bourdieu was aware of the need to set an organization at the service of sociological truth in order to ensure



its success both in this field as in society in general. Like Spinoza, he did not believe in “the intrinsic strength of the true idea.” According to this, it would be possible to differentiate two styles of work in Argentina, as a result of the way its authors were included within the field of Bourdieusianism at different times and under different conditions. On the one hand, there are those whose intention it is to spread the work of Bourdieu, often as an act of political militancy. On the other hand, there are those who purport to make a *distinguished* use of Pierre Bourdieu.

These styles are easily distinguishable by the way they make use of the quote, over-abundantly in one and scant to the point of non-existence in the other (“You will never see me quote concepts of Bourdieu in my work,” says one anthropologist by way of example.)<sup>24</sup> Both approaches were consistently encouraged by Bourdieu.

*I express my gratitude to the anthropologists and sociologists who agreed to be interviewed: R.C. Abinzano, C. Altamirano, L.J. Bartolomé, F. Beigel, F. Cortés, R. Costa, E. De Ipola, A.M. Gorosito, A. Grimson, R. Guber, A. Gutiérrez, C. Kaplan, M. Libchaber, F. Mallimacci, J.F. Martín, A.T. Martínez, H. Palomino, F. Ortega, A. Quevedo, L. Rubinich, R. Sautu, J. Szabon, R. Sidicaro, G. Sorá, E. Tenti, P. Vain, and S. Visacovsky.*

## References

- Abbott, A.  
2002 *Chaos of Disciplines*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Altamirano, C., and Sarlo, B.  
1983 *Literatura /sociedad*. Buenos Aires: Hachette.
- Auyero, J.  
1997 “Estudios sobre clientelismo político contemporáneo.” Pp. 13-39 in *¿Favores por votos? Estudios sobre clientelismo político contemporáneo*, edited by J. Auyero. Buenos Aires: Losada.
- 2005 “L’espace des luttes. Topographie des mobilisations collectives.” *ARSS* 160: 122-132.
- Baranger, D.  
2005 *Epistemología y metodología en la obra de Pierre Bourdieu*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo.
- Beigel, F.  
2003 *El itinerario y la brújula. El vanguardismo estético-político de José Carlos Mariátegui*. Buenos Aires: Biblos.
- 2006 “Vida, muerte y resurrección de las teorías de la dependencia.” Pp. 287-326 in *Crítica y teoría en el pensamiento social latinoamericano*, edited by F. Beigel et al. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

<sup>24</sup> This makes the approach in question harder to pick up if one remains with the external aspect of the texts.

- Blanco, A.  
2006 *Razón y modernidad. Gino Germani y la sociología argentina*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.
- Boltanski, L.  
1975 *Los usos sociales del cuerpo*. Buenos Aires: Periferia.
- Bourdieu, P.  
1967 [1966] "Campo intelectual y proyecto creador." Pp. 135-182 in *Problemas del estructuralismo*, edited by J. Pouillon. México: Siglo XXI.  
1968 [1965, 1960] "El sentimiento del honor en la sociedad de Cabilia." Pp. 175-224 in *El concepto del honor en la sociedad mediterránea*, edited by J.G. Peristiany. Barcelona: Labor.  
1969 [1966] "Condición de clase y posición de clase." Pp. 71-100 in *Estructuralismo y sociología*, edited by J. Sazbón. Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión.  
1985 "Espacio social y génesis de las clases." *Espacios de crítica y producción* 2: 24-35.  
1990 *Sociología y cultura*. México: Grijalbo.  
1991 "On the possibility of a field of world sociology." Pp. 373-387 in *Social Theory for a Changing Society*, edited by P. Bourdieu and J.S Coleman. Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press.  
1992 (with L.J. Wacquant) *Réponses. Pour une anthropologie réflexive*. Paris: Seuil.  
1996 "Passport to Duke." *The International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 33 (2): 145-150.  
2000 *El sociólogo y las transformaciones recientes de la economía en la sociedad*. Buenos Aires: Libros del Rojas.  
2002 "Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées." *ARSS* 145: 3-8.
- Bourdieu, P., and Passeron, J.C.  
1968 [1964] *Los estudiantes y la cultura*. Barcelona: Labor.  
1977 [1970] *La reproducción: elementos para una teoría del sistema de enseñanza*. Barcelona: Laia.
- Bourdieu, P., and Sayad, A.  
1965 [1964] *Argelia entra en la historia*. Barcelona: Nova terra.
- Bourdieu, P., Chamboredon, J.C., and Passeron, J.C.  
1975 [1973, 1969] *El oficio del sociólogo. Presupuestos epistemológicos*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.
- Bunge, M.  
1999 *Las ciencias sociales en discusión. Una perspectiva filosófica*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana.
- Correa, R.  
2007 "Discurso del Presidente de la República de Ecuador en la conmemoración de los 50 años de la FLACSO." *Carta de Clacso* 117, october 2007.
- Costa, R.L.  
2006 "The Logic of Practices in Pierre Bourdieu." *Current Sociology* 54: 873-895.
- De Ípola, E.  
1970 "Vers une science du texte social. Le (re)-commencement de la sociologie marxiste." *Sociologie et sociétés* 2: 123-143.
- Franco, R.  
2007 *La FLACSO clásica (1957-1973). Vicisitudes de las Ciencias Sociales latinoamericanas*. Santiago de Chile: Flacso.

García Canclini, N.

1990 "Presentación." Pp. 9-50 in P. Bourdieu, *Sociología y cultura*. México: Grijalbo.

1982 *Las culturas populares bajo el capitalismo*. México: Nueva Imagen.

Guber, R.

1991 *El salvaje metropolitano*. Buenos Aires: Legasa.

2001 *La etnografía. Método, campo y reflexividad*. Buenos Aires: Norma.

Gutiérrez, A.

1994 *Pierre Bourdieu: las prácticas sociales*. Buenos Aires: Cedral.

2004 *Pobre, como siempre... Estrategias de reproducción social en la pobreza*. Córdoba: Ferreyra.

2005 "La reproducción de la pauvreté. Note de recherche: Sur les échanges de capital social à Cordoba." *ARSS* 160: 88-97.

Heredia, B.

1979 *La morada da vida. Trabalho familiar de pequenos produtores do Nordeste do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Martínez, A.T.

2007a "Lectura y lectores de Bourdieu en Argentina." *Prismas. Revista de historia intelectual* 11: 11-30.

2007b *Pierre Bourdieu. Razones y lecciones de una práctica sociológica*. Buenos Aires: Manantial.

Myers, J.

2004 "Pasados en pugna." Pp. 67-106 in *Intelectuales y expertos. La constitución del conocimiento social en Argentina*, edited by F. Neiburg and M. Plotkin. Buenos Aires: Paidós.

Neiburg, F.

1998 *Los Intelectuales y la invención del Peronismo. Estudio de antropología social y cultural*. Buenos Aires: Alianza.

Neiburg, F., and Plotkin, M.

2004a "Internationalisation et développement. Les "Di Tella" et la nouvelle économie en Argentine." *ARSS* 151-152: 57-68.

2004b *Intelectuales y expertos. La constitución del conocimiento social en Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.

Passeron, J.C.

2004 "Del Oficio del sociólogo al Razonamiento sociológico (Denis Baranger entrevista a J.C. Passeron)." *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 60: 369-403.

Patiño, R.

1999 "Discursos teóricos y proyectos intelectuales: *Punto de Vista* y la introducción de Raymond Williams y Pierre Bourdieu en la Argentina." *e.t.c.* 10: 25-33.

Rubinich L.

1999 "Los sociólogos intelectuales: cuatro notas sobre la sociología en los '60.'" *Apuntes de investigación* 4: 31-55.

Sarlo, B.

1998 "Bourdieu no siempre estuvo de moda." *Clarín, Revista Ñ*, 20-sep-1998.

Sidicaro R.

2002 *Los tres peronismos*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.

Sigal, S.

1991 *Intelectuales y poder en la década del sesenta*. Buenos Aires: Puntosur.

Solari, A., Franco, R., and Jutkowikz, J.

1976 *Teoría, acción social y desarrollo en América Latina*. México: Siglo XXI.

Sorá, G.

1998 "Francfort: la foire d'empoigne." *Liber. Revue internationale des livres* 34: 2-3.

1999 "La maison et l'entreprise. José Olympio et l'évolution de l'édition brésilienne." *ARSS* 126-127: 90-102.

2002 "Un échange dénié, La traduction d'auteurs brésiliens en Argentine." *ARSS* 145: 61-70.

2003 *Traducir el Brasil. Una antropología de la circulación internacional de las ideas*. Buenos Aires: Del Zorzal.

2004 "Editores y editoriales de ciencias sociales: un capital específico." Pp. 265-292 in *Intelectuales y expertos. La constitución del conocimiento social en Argentina*, edited by F. Neiburg and M. Plotkin. Buenos Aires: Paidós.

Steinmetz, G.

2005 "Introduction." Pp. 1-56 in *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences. Positivism and its Epistemological Others*, edited by G. Steinmetz. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Tenti Fanfani, E.

1984 "La interacción maestro-alumno: discusión sociológica." *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 46:161-172.

1999 "Civilización y 'descivilización.' Norbert Elias y Pierre Bourdieu intérpretes de la cuestión social contemporánea." *Sociedad* 14: 7-28.

Touraine, A.

1996 "Entrevista a Alain Touraine." *Clarín*, 12 jan 96.

## The Reception of Bourdieu in Latin America and Argentina

---

**Abstract:** An analysis of the way Bourdieu's work has been received in Latin America necessarily involves taking into consideration the particular characteristics of the fields of reception in their different successive states. Although such processes of reception may have certain features in common, following the cadence set by the edition and circulation of the translated versions of the works, each national field has its own dynamic and thus demands specific study. The author starts by describing Bourdieu's relationship with Latin America before examining the Argentine case in greater depth.

---

*Keywords:* Argentina, Bourdieu, sociological theory, Latin America.

---

**Denis Baranger** is a sociologist, full Professor at the Graduate Program of Social Anthropology of the Universidad Nacional de Misiones (Argentina), teaching Methodology and Epistemology of the social sciences. His publications include books like *Epistemología y metodología en la obra de Pierre Bourdieu* (Buenos Aires, Prometeo, 2004), *Construcción y análisis de datos. Una introducción al uso de técnicas cuantitativas en la investigación social* (Posadas, 2001, Ed. Universitaria), *Tabaco y agrotóxicos* (Posadas, 2007, Ed. Universitaria) as well as papers on topics like Sociological Theory or Rural Sociology.