

Lebaron, Frédéric

## Article

## Note from the editor

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. 36th World Congress, the International Institute of Sociology, Beijing, July 7-11, 2003, organised by the "International Institute of Sociology" and the "Institute of Sociology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)", Session (No 51): "Adaptations to Globalisation: The role of social capital".

. Beyond Traditional Employment. Industrial Relations in the Network Economy. 13th World Congress of the International Industrial Relations Association (IIRA), September 8 – 12, 2003, Free University of Berlin, Germany.

**Appel à communication**

**NOTE FROM THE EDITOR**

This new issue of the Economic Sociology Newsletter contains material and reflexions for a better understanding of Pierre Bourdieu's contribution to economic sociology.

Bourdieu never supported "overspecialization" inside the social sciences and was very reluctant to define his contribution to the scientific knowledge of economic activities as a particular kind of " economic sociology". But his theoretical and empirical work since the beginning of the 1960s was largely motivated and dynamized by a direct confrontation to

economic models and economic explanations. He was one of the scholars who tried to systematically hybridize economics and sociology and did this in a particularly provocative manner.

Bourdieu's close and complex (some would say "ambivalent") relations to neoclassical economics, his use of the notions of "interest" and "illusio", his constructivist and structural definitions of "class", his attempts to discover the structures of the French economic elites ("patronat") and the French field of power can be important sources of inspiration for contemporary economic sociologists. These themes will be presented and discussed by Richard Swedberg, Bernard Convert, Elliot B. Weininger, Johs Hjellbrekke and Olav Korsnes.

As a complement to the previous issue of the Newsletter, which was focused on the sociology of economics, Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas develops a synthetic and a critical discussion of the recent trends in this field.

Frédéric Lebaron  
[lebaron@msh-paris.fr](mailto:lebaron@msh-paris.fr)

## **Bourdieu's Advocacy of the Concept of Interest and Its Role in Economic Sociology**

by

Richard Swedberg

[richard.swedberg@sociology.su.se](mailto:richard.swedberg@sociology.su.se)/[rs328@cornell.edu](mailto:rs328@cornell.edu)

According to Bourdieu, sociology must draw on four key concepts in order to make a solid analysis. Three of these are well known in the secondary literature on Bourdieu and often discussed: *habitus*, *field* and different types of *capital*. The fourth concept, on the other hand, is rarely discussed and often not even mentioned: *interest*. According to Bourdieu, "*interest* is 'to be there', to participate, to admit that the game is worth playing and that the stakes created in and through the fact are worth pursuing; it is to recognize the game and to recognize its stakes" (Bourdieu 1998:77; cf. Bourdieu 1990, 1992, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:115-17). The opposite of interest (or "*illusio*") is indifference (or "*ataraxia*"). Each field has its own interest, even if it masquerades as disinterestedness. Bourdieu criticizes the economists' version of interest for being ahistorical - "far from being an anthropological invariant, interest is a *historical arbitrary*" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:116). The economists are also in his opinion wrong in thinking that "economic interest" is what drives everything; "anthropology and comparative history show that the properly social magic of institutions can constitute just about anything as an interest" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:117).

In the rest of this article I will make an argument that interest ought to be central to economic sociology, and must not be neglected in this type of sociology, as it is today. References to Bourdieu's concept of interest will be made throughout the route, but the perspective is broader since interest analysis goes far back in social thought and exists in many different versions.

### **The Concept of Interest and Its Role in Economic Sociology**