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## Notes

1. Fiske, Alan Page (1993), *Structure of Social Life : The Four Elementary Forms of Human Relations*, New York, The Free Press.
2. Bourdieu, Pierre, with Wacquant Loïc J.D. (1992), *Réponses*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, p. 91 and onward in the French edition.
3. Bourdieu, Pierre and Darbel, Alain (1966), La fin d'un malthusianisme, in Darras, " *Le partage des bénéfices*", Paris, Editions de Minuit, pp 135-154.
4. Bourdieu, Pierre (1977), *Algérie 60. Structures économiques et structures temporelles*, Paris, Editions de Minuit.
5. Bourdieu, Pierre (1979), *La Distinction*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, note 4 p. 111, French edition.
6. For example, on the subject of attitudes regarding time, Bourdieu cites the model proposed by Becker in his " *Theory of Time Allocation*": the time cost increases at the same time as productivity. Conversely, when productivity is low, goods scarcity strong and time scarcity weak, the best thing is to do as Algerian farmers do: spend time extravagantly, waste time, which is the only thing in abundance. (Bourdieu, Pierre (1980), *Le Sens pratique*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, note 8 p. 200, French edition).
7. In "Avenir de classe et causalité du probable", *Revue Française de Sociologie*, XV, 1974, a criticism he takes up again almost word-for-word fifteen years later in " *The State Nobility*", (French edition : Bourdieu, Pierre (1989), *La noblesse d'Etat*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, p. 391-392.)
8. "The concept of 'human capital,' weak and vague and heavily laden with sociologically unacceptable assumptions...". Bourdieu, Pierre (2000) *Les structures sociales de l'économie*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, p 12.
9. *Réponses*, op. cit., p.92.

## Class Analysis and Cultural Analysis in Bourdieu

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Despite longstanding predictions and ever-more frequent declarations to the contrary, social class remains a fertile concept in English-language sociology.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is also a concept that has undergone dramatic transformation over the last few decades. Indeed, perhaps the most notable aspect of the class theories that have attained prominence during this period lies in their forthright embrace of a rational action perspective. Thus, despite their substantial differences, both the "neo-Marxist" theory of class developed by Erik Wright and the "neo-Weberian" approach cultivated by John Goldthorpe are unabashedly rationalist in orientation.<sup>2</sup> And, while the use of techniques founded on the supposition of rationality has undoubtedly been important in efforts to revamp a concept that (especially in the Marxist case) was in genuine need of critical scrutiny, it also remains true that the widespread turn to these techniques has exacted a price. In particular, the theme of culture has largely slipped off the agenda of class analysis, at least insofar as it takes its bearings from either neo-Marxist or neo-Weberian premises: the utilitarian conceptions of action in which these theories are rooted leave little room at the programmatic level for an analysis of patterns of meaning (even if, from time to time, they prove amenable to *ad hoc* references to culture).

When viewed against this backdrop, the work of Pierre Bourdieu constitutes something of an anomaly. On the one hand, Bourdieu's writings - with their twin emphases on class and culture - are widely translated into English, frequently read, and heavily cited. On the other hand, however, most English-language researchers and commentators have made little effort to come to terms with the peculiarities of Bourdieu's conception of social class

(and by extension, with the view of culture it entails), preferring instead to reflexively don Weberian- or Marxian-tinted lenses in order to read these writings. The result has been a situation in which the centrality of the connection between class and culture in Bourdieu's work is acknowledged, but its particular meaning remains elusive. Indeed, at risk of simplification, it may be suggested that researchers who take their cue from Bourdieu generally remain content either to appropriate the concept of "habitus" or to examine patterns of "highbrow" cultural consumption (à la *Distinction*); in both cases, however, an aspect of Bourdieu's sociology tends to be fused to a class concept of alien provenance. Conversely, "theorists" who address the class-culture connection in Bourdieu typically recognize little more than a rehash of the ideology critique familiar from earlier decades, or an unstable blend of Marxist vinegar and Weberian oil ("class + status," vigorously shaken). In none of these cases does Bourdieu emerge as a full-blown, coherent alternative to "de-culturalized" conceptions of social class.

To be sure, not all of the sources of this situation lie outside of Bourdieu's writings themselves. Beyond the frequently-raised question of their difficult style, there remains the fact that *Distinction*, in particular, makes rather heavy use of Marxist terminology (e.g. "relations of production," "class fractions," etc.). As I shall attempt to demonstrate below, this vocabulary can obscure Bourdieu's conception of social class, and by extension, his view of the class-culture relation.<sup>3</sup> In developing this conception, Bourdieu drew as needed on the sociological canon; however, of the intellectual resources the canon made available, the least important were, arguably, the Marxist traditions of class theory and ideology critique.

In what follows, I would like to sketch Bourdieu's understanding of social class and of the role of culture in his class analysis.<sup>4</sup> In order to develop these themes within the space of a short essay, I shall present a highly schematic account, one that cannot do justice to the rich empirical content of Bourdieu's writings. Nevertheless, I believe that this account can serve to indicate the ways in which Bourdieu's work provides the basis of an alternative to the de-culturalized approaches to class that are becoming increasingly influential in English-language sociology.

## I.

Taking up the question of the relation between social class and lifestyle, Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) develops a relatively straightforward sociological argument: location in the class structure is causally related to a subjective system of dispositions (the habitus); this, in turn, engenders a variety of consumption practices which, as "expressions" of the same dispositions, cohere with one another semantically, and thus exhibit the unity of a lifestyle.

Bourdieu's first break from more familiar traditions of class theory derives from the substitution of the notion of "social space" for that of an (objective) class structure. He constructs a model of this space through the statistical analysis of data that include multiple indicators of the economic and cultural capital of individuals clustered into broad occupational categories, as well as of their families of origin.<sup>5</sup> The analysis yields a factorial space constituted by three orthogonal axes (ranked in terms of the variance they "explain"). The first axis represents the total volume of capital (economic and cultural) associated with each position in the occupational division of labor, and is interpreted to differentiate *class locations* from one another. The second axis represents the composition of capital associated with each position (or as Bourdieu puts it, the "ratio" of one type of capital to the other), and is interpreted to differentiate *fractions* within class locations. The third axis represents the class and fraction location of the family of origin, and is interpreted to differentiate trajectories from one another.<sup>6</sup>

In the explanatory scheme that animates *Distinction*, there are two significant aspects of this "social space" that must be recognized. On the one hand, it is intended to serve as a

model of the *system of objective relations* between possible combinations of the most sociologically salient assets in the society. In this respect, the model designates "the set of actually usable resources and powers" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 114) typically held by incumbents of the various positions within the occupational division of labor. On the other hand, each location in social space corresponds to a particular "class condition" - that is, to particular "*conditions of existence*" which entail a specific experience of material necessity. In this respect, the notion of social space serves to identify variations in the social environment within which the habitus has been formed.

Much of *Distinction* is therefore devoted to an empirical demonstration that 1) different consumption practices can be intelligibly viewed as the "expression" of an underlying set of subjective dispositions, and thus cohere into lifestyles, and 2) that these dispositions are, in turn, consistent with the particular mix of "resources and powers" associated with the location in social space in which they are rooted. Thus, for example, the artists and professors exhibit a lifestyle unified around the principle of "aristocratic asceticism," prizing only the most intellectually demanding elements of culture while decrying all things material, whereas the employers, with their "taste of luxury," embrace opulence and shun the "arid" provocations of the most avant-garde cultural forms.

## II.

However, Bourdieu's study is not content merely to demonstrate that the contours of the "space of lifestyles" are isomorphic with those of social space. Lifestyles are *symbolic*. This means, in the first instance, that they function as emblems of class (and fraction) position - that is, as indicators of the wealth (material and cultural) of those who display them. Nevertheless, this does not exhaust their significance. We can specify two further functions fulfilled by lifestyles, and, for Bourdieu, by the symbolic in general.

What might be called the Durkheimian-Maussian function of the symbolic becomes apparent as soon as we acknowledge that volume of capital, composition of capital, and trajectory - the three dimensions that define social space - are *gradational* in form. A three-dimensional space constituted by gradational axes is, per definition, one that is *devoid of inherent boundaries*. In other words, classes (and fractions) are not demarcated from one another at the level of structure.<sup>7</sup> Once this is recognized, it becomes clear that consumption practices serve as more than mere emblems of location in social space. As a symbolic vehicle, each act of consumption enables individuals to express their affinity or antipathy for one another. In doing so, these individuals introduce symbolic boundaries into the continuous structure of social space, categorizing themselves, vis-à-vis all others, as alike or different. Indeed, the symbolic, for Bourdieu, is a "separative power,... *diacrisis*, *discretio*, drawing discrete units out of indivisible continuities, difference out of the undifferentiated" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 479). Moreover, the process through which demarcations of the social space are established is, for Bourdieu, inherently antagonistic:

Every real inquiry into the divisions of the social world has to analyze the interests associated with membership or non-membership. As is shown by the attention devoted to the strategic, "frontier" groups such as the "labor aristocracy", which hesitates between class compromise and class collaboration,... the laying down of boundaries between the classes is inspired by the strategic aim of "counting in" or "being counted in," "cataloguing" or "annexing"... (Bourdieu 1984, pp. 476)

The practices that comprise a lifestyle thus serve as the medium through which individuals undertake an elementary form of *social classification*. Put schematically, individuals vie to impose a categorical symbolic frame onto the continuous structure of social space. The result of successful imposition is a recognized set of *social collectivities* - or in other words, social classes (and "social fractions").<sup>8</sup> In the course of this process of classification, social

space-which Bourdieu also refers to as the "field of classes" - stands as a background constraint on alternative classificatory strategies: the likelihood of the successful imposition of any particular symbolic frame is conditioned by the *relative proximity*, within this space, of the individuals who are to be incorporated into the same collectivity (Bourdieu 1990, p. 138).<sup>9</sup>

In addition to enabling classification, the symbolic fulfills a function that can be termed Weberian. Specifically, it serves as the medium through which individuals and collectivities proffer claims for *social honor*. It is around this dimension of the symbolic that whole discussion of "cultural legitimacy" revolves in *Distinction*. The allocation of social honor proceeds on the basis of individuals' capacity to claim legitimacy for their lifestyles and for the particular practices that compose them. Drawing on their cultural and material resources, and propelled by their habitus, they seek to appropriate the legitimate culture in the legitimate manner - or seek to contest the grounds on which legitimacy is accorded. The consequence of competitions and conflicts over the legitimate culture is a hierarchy, of greater or lesser stability, of social worth and prestige.<sup>10</sup>

Together, classification and the allocation of honor yield social classes and class fractions in their "primitive" state - that is, in the "misrecognizable" form of status groups. In this way, it may be argued, Bourdieu knits class to culture more tightly than any of the alternative approaches currently on the sociological scene, but without sliding off into the semiological free-for-all of "postmodern" social theory.

### III.

Insofar as the symbolic boundaries that constitute collectivities are engendered through lifestyle differences, they are necessarily indistinct, fuzzy, and porous; moreover, such boundaries can only be sustained by continuous re-generation in the ongoing flux of consumption practices. However, as soon as we look beyond *Distinction*, it becomes clear that, for Bourdieu, lifestyle amounts only to one of the modalities in which the symbolic operates. (Indeed, it is the project of analyzing these different modalities that integrates *Distinction* with the rest of Bourdieu's corpus.) The demarcation lines between social groups become progressively more sharp and durable to the extent that the symbolic frameworks through which actors perceive and appreciate social differences are *codified*. As Bourdieu declares, "To codify means to banish the effect of vagueness and indeterminacy, boundaries which are badly drawn and divisions which are only approximate, by producing clear classes and making clear cuts, establishing firm frontiers..." (1990, p. 82). In the available space, the different modalities of symbolic classification can only be briefly touched upon.

Oriented to wine and clothing, art and leisure, consumption practices do not, as a rule, have group boundaries as their theme. Thus, these boundaries attain a provisional codification as soon as they are articulated discursively - or in other words, once the collectivity is *named*. Once classes receive linguistic designations, criteria of inclusion can be articulated, and their limits can become a theme of interest (in both senses of the term). Moreover, only with the discursive identification of the group can an individual come to recognize his or her membership in a collectivity. This means that the name stands as the precondition of any collective *mobilization* (1991, pp. 206-207). The discursive classification of the social order often merely articulates differences that are already given through lifestyles.

Additionally, issues of status and prestige also arise here. For according to Bourdieu, considerations of status impact individuals' inclination to enter into competitions to describe the social world, insofar as these are situated in forums dominated by norms of the "legitimate" use of language (see 1991, pp. 90-102). Thus, the proclivity to speak on behalf of the collective - to describe its situation, to articulate its needs and demands, etc. - is at least partially conditioned by a sense of "worthiness" that has its roots in the status order.

Hence, in Bourdieu's assessment, members of the working class tend to be prone to self-censorship, refraining from the kind of public speech that could serve to codify the identity of the class. Consequently, they find themselves compelled to *delegate* this work to professional "spokespersons": "The 'working class' exists in and through the body of representatives who give it an audible voice and a visible presence, and in and through the belief in its existence which this body of plenipotentaries succeeds in imposing..." (Bourdieu 1991, p. 251).<sup>11</sup>

Symbolic divisions of the social space achieve a greater codification when they are inscribed into objectivity via *institutionalization*. Educational credentials are Bourdieu's preferred example. Various social categories - for example, "skilled manual laborer" or "professional" - exist largely by virtue of the educational system's capacity to confer degrees that serve as a de facto or de jure condition of entry into specific occupations. Bourdieu's later educational sociology - and in particular, *The State Nobility* (1996) - increasingly focused on this function of credentials, emphasizing their powers to *separate* holders from non-holders and simultaneously *elevate* the former over the latter in the status order.

The symbolic boundaries differentiating classes and fractions from one another attain their greatest objectivity when written into *law*. Here, the process of tracing of boundaries is subject to an extreme level of formalization, resulting in highly precise demarcation of collectivities. Such boundaries are further distinguished by the fact that they are actively enforced by a branch of state.

With this, it becomes clear that Bourdieu's focus on the classificatory power of symbolic expression logically culminates in a sociology of *the state*. Playing off of Weber's famous statement, Bourdieu defines the state as "that X... which successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical and *symbolic* violence over a definite territory" (Bourdieu 1998, p. 40). With this definition, he wishes to foreground the universally recognized and exclusive right of the state to determine or at least adjudicate all social boundaries that enjoy an *obligatory validity*. This right touches on things like educational credentials, which the state oversees from a distance (variable, of course, according to time and place), but also the endless administrative taxonomies that the various bureaus and agencies of state construct in order to directly regulate various domains of social life.

The exercise of this aspect of state authority has divergent consequences on classificatory conflicts that transpire at lower levels of codification (that is, in discourse or through lifestyles). On the one hand, the obligatory character of state-sanctioned classifications can restrict the range options open to actors who clash with one another over the meaning and perception of the social world. On the other hand, however, access to and influence over the state authority itself becomes an object of such conflicts. Occupational classifications stand out as one of the examples most pertinent to the question of class. Produced by administrative agencies with regulatory authority, these "state forms of classification" (Bourdieu 1998, p. 54) are imposed on economic actors, affecting all aspects of economic behavior (hiring, recompense, task definition, etc.). As such, their origin can be traced back to the bureaucratic field in which they were formulated, whose agents enjoy a monopoly over the production of "official" descriptions of the economy (Bourdieu 1998, pp. 58-60). Nevertheless, the impetus for many occupational classifications lies in the economic domain itself, where actors frequently petition the state to *ratify* the outcomes of conflicts over the relation between titles and jobs (Bourdieu 1996, pp. 122-123).

#### IV.

Bourdieu's sociology demands that we take seriously the link between social class and symbolic classification. Once this is established, the unity that underlies much of Bourdieu's work becomes readily apparent. As Wacquant has suggested, "Bourdieu's entire oeuvre may be read as a quest to explicate the specificity and potency of symbolic power" (1993, pp. 1-2). By tracking the symbolic through its various modalities - from seemingly incidental

endeavors such as enjoying a book or a CD to the equally mundane act of using a collective noun, from humanistic or technocratic credentialing systems to the magisterial pronouncements of law - Bourdieu's research seeks to reveal the inner workings a form of power which is ignored by class theories that have over-committed themselves to materialism and/or rationalism.<sup>12</sup>

By refusing to recognize boundaries between classes and fractions at the level of social structure, Bourdieu attempted to de-naturalize them, and thereby historicize them more radically than alternative approaches: collectivities, his work implies, must be approached by sociologists as "historical artifacts" (Bourdieu 1987, pp. 8-9). At an analytic level, the most immediate consequence of this decision is to refocus attention on the "agentic" dimension of class-that is, on the role of lifestyles, language-use, state policy and the like in "constructing" social collectivities. However, it is necessary to recall that Bourdieu did not forswear the concept of a class structure that exercises "causal powers."<sup>13</sup> It is precisely his fusion of structural analysis and phenomenological analysis that has no clear analogue in English-language studies of social class.

Of course, if Bourdieu's re-conceptualization of social class offers a potential alternative to the unpalatable choice between rational action models, on the one hand, and hyper-cultural "postmodernism," on the other, this alternative is by no means "ready-made." As a result of his rigid insistence on the integration of theory with empirical analysis, Bourdieu's work is in many ways bound up with the particularities of the context in which his research was carried out, and thus cannot be mechanically transposed elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, it may be hoped that as the English-language reception of Bourdieu's work progresses, the emphasis will move beyond the current vogues for meta-theoretical pronouncement and incidental borrowing, to instead reflectively engage with the careful reconstruction of fundamental sociological concepts that can be found there.

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1. In the U.S., Robert Nisbet pronounced the eclipse of social class as an analytically worthwhile concept in 1959. Many of the English-language quarrels of the last 15 years over the viability of the class concept remain within the orbit of the debates triggered by Nisbet. For recent arguments against continued use of the concept of class, see Pakulski and Waters (1996) and Kingston (2000); see also the debates reproduced in Lee and Turner (1996).

2. For an application and overview of the neo-Marxist perspective see Wright (1997; forthcoming); for Wright's views on and defense of the use of rational action theory, see Wright (1994, pp. 189-191). The underpinnings of Goldthorpe's approach to social class are elaborated upon in (2000, pp. 206-229); see also Breen (forthcoming). His arguments for the primacy of rationalistic action theory are found in Goldthorpe (2000, pp. 115-136).



3. To fully understand the peculiar role of Marxian vocabulary in Bourdieu's writings it would be necessary to analyze the French sociological field of the 1960s and 1970s - including, in particular, the various strains of Marxist and non-Marxist class analysis being practiced at the time - in order to thereby illuminate his attempts to carve out an alternative (and oppositional) position.

In a different vein, it should be noted that, despite certain high profile (and highly polemical) exceptions, the magnitude of Bourdieu's divergence from Marxism on the question of class and culture is better-recognized in France than in English-speaking countries - for example, in Accardo (1997) and Pinto (2000).

4. I draw on Weininger (2002, forthcoming).

5. Bourdieu utilizes Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), a relatively unfamiliar technique in English-language sociology that is similar in some ways to factor analysis. For a discussion of Bourdieu's preference for MCA, see Rouanet, Ackermann, and Le Roux (2000).

6. The degree to which the resulting model departs from traditional conceptions of class, and especially the "classical" Marxist ones, is rarely remarked upon. Nevertheless, it is dramatic. To take just the most obvious example, Bourdieu's construction results in a "dominant" class whose antithetical fractions are comprised by artists and intellectuals, on the one hand, and industrial and commercial employers, on the other. Is it necessary to belabor the fact that these fractions do not represent different "moments" in the process of commodity production?

7. This implies that the chapters of *Distinction* which analyze classes individually (by and large, in order to examine internecine conflicts between fractions) rest on a thoroughly arbitrary demarcation. Bourdieu acknowledges this, at least with respect to the differentiation of fractions from one another (Bourdieu 1984, pp. 258-259).

8. It is his interest in this Durkheimian-Maussian dimension of the symbolic which leads Bourdieu to declare, a propos of social classes, that "the question with which all sociology ought to begin" is "that of the existence... and mode of existence of collectives" (Bourdieu 1991, p. 250).

9. Within the Marxist tradition, the argument developed by Adam Przeworski in a 1977 essay on class formation comes closest to this aspect of Bourdieu's approach: "classifications of positions must be viewed as immanent to the practices that (may) result in class formation. The very theory of classes must be viewed as internal to particular political projects" (Przeworski 1985, p. 67). However, Przeworski's argument, though much debated, never gave rise to a sustained program of empirical research.

10. It is in this context that Bourdieu's depiction of working class has generated vehement criticism: by his own account, the members of this class tend to quiescently exclude themselves from competitions over legitimate culture, thus serving as little more than a "foil" against which members of the other classes may symbolically assert their distinction, and hence their elevated status. However, in the discussions of practices such as food consumption and language use in *Distinction*, one can also identify an alternative account. In these arenas, the working class is presented as culturally self-assertive, implicitly and explicitly "[challenging] the legitimate art of living" (see Bourdieu 1984, pp. 179, 395). The factor triggering one of these stances or the other would appear to be the manner in which cultural "consecration" is organized: in areas of culture in which the formation of canons (e.g. the arts) or the establishment of "trends" (e.g. clothing) is more or less effectively monopolized by a small group of "experts" and producers, the working class - bereft of the cultural capital needed to access the relevant institutions and interpersonal networks - opts for self-exclusion; however, in the areas where the conferral of legitimacy is more diffuse, contestation is perceived as plausible. Bourdieu undoubtedly considers the former to be the norm and the latter an exception, as evidenced by his remarks on cultural "dispossession" and "alienation" (1984, pp. 386ff.).

11. It is only once we realize that discourse amounts to a (partially) codified exercise of the same capacity to draw boundaries and allocate honor that inheres in lifestyle practices that it becomes clear why Bourdieu's *Distinction* - a text which, after all, is devoted to analyzing the social conditions of *aesthetic* judgment - should conclude with a chapter examining the circulation of *normative-political* judgments in the public sphere (Bourdieu 1984, pp. 397-465). The place of this chapter in the work has received little attention from English-language commentators despite the apparent incongruity of its subject matter.

12. It must be pointed out that Bourdieu pursued this interest well beyond the question of social class, even if the latter tended to enjoy a certain prominence in most of his work. I have discussed at length Bourdieu's view of the relation between class and factors such as gender in Weininger (2002; forthcoming).

13. Wacquant summarizes Bourdieu's twin emphases well when he declares that "[c]lass lies neither in structures nor in agency alone but in their relationship as it is historically produced, reproduced, and transformed" (1991, p. 51).

14. For an effort at an informed transposition of certain aspects of Bourdieu's educational sociology to the U.S. context, see Weininger and Lareau (forthcoming). It must be admitted, however, that this essay makes use of a traditional concept of social class.

## **"Le patronat norvégien": State vs. Market?**

### **Capital Structures, Oppositions and Political Position Taking in the Norwegian Field of Power.**

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#### 1. Introduction

Concepts like power, class and elite are most often founded on an assumption that society, the positions an individual occupies herein and also the relations between individuals located in these positions, can be analysed as a multidimensional hierarchy. And while it is common to separate between different forms of power (as for instance military, bureaucratic, economic or symbolic power), it is also common to separate between different types of elites, for instance political, administrative and economic elites (Scott (ed.)1990, Suleiman & Mendras (eds.) 1997).

The criteria for the latter differentiation have usually been related to societal sectors, specific societal tasks, levels of power or to functional criteria. As early as in 1950, Raymond Aron argued in favour of a division based on the function of ruling, and identified 5 subgroups of the elite: political leaders, government administrators, economic leaders, leaders of the masses and military chiefs (Aron 1950a : 9). Aron went on to emphasize that an analysis of elites also had to be relational and comparative in orientation: "By the structure of the élite I mean the relation between various groups in the élite which is peculiar to each society. Indeed, although there are everywhere business managers, government officials, trade union secretaries and ministers, they are not everywhere recruited in the same way and they may either form one coherent whole or remain comparatively distinct from one another." (ibid. p.10)

While not sharing Aron's functional approach, we agree with his relational strategy and his call for comparative analysis. Drawing inspiration from Bourdieu and Bourdieu & de Saint-Martin's work (in particular Bourdieu & de Saint-Martin 1978, Bourdieu 1989), we will in this short article suggest how a relational strategy in studies of classes and elites may be developed through a brief analysis of attitudes of "le patronat norvégien" towards the role of the State vs. the Market when it comes to what should be the central principles of political and societal organisation.