

Context in Newsroom Ethnography

Reflexive sociology and the concepts of journalistic field, news habitus and newsroom capital

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Reflexive sociology and the concepts of journalistic field, news habitus and newsroom capital.

Abstract

The reflexive sociology of Pierre Bourdieu offers a promising analytical framework for extending the insights offered by the classic tradition of ethnographic newsroom studies. On a methodological level, the analytical framework of field theory shows potential in addressing one of the key questions in ethnographic research: The question of theorising and empirically investigating context. The question is not least practical in nature. When it comes to newsroom ethnography, one of the traditional inference problems you will be faced with as a researcher is the 'invisibility' of certain structures guiding journalistic practice, for instance the political-economy of everyday news work. Working with the analytical concepts 'journalistic field', 'news habitus' and 'newsroom capital', the reflexive sociology offers a research strategy for simultaneously studying journalistic practices and the structures that enable and constrain them. This paper will define some key concepts in reflexive sociology which can be put into empirical work in ethnographic media production studies, using empirical material from a Danish television news ethnography as illustrative examples.

After a short introduction the paper will present the epistemology of field theory in the section "Context: a critical, reflexive and relational approach" and apply the analytical concepts used for exploring context in the section "Journalistic Field, News Habitus and Newsroom Capitals" before concluding.

Introduction

Pierre Bourdieu is the author of over thirty books, hundreds of articles and is one of the most acclaimed sociologists in recent times. His outstanding work from 1979, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, has been rated as the 'sixth most important social scientific work' of the last century and his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* from 1972 was reviewed one of the ten most influential books of the past quarter of the century (Swartz 2002). In the years prior to his early death in 2002 Pierre Bourdieu took an interest in mass media and news journalism with the same critical, analytical nerve with which he had earlier addressed such phenomena as the French educational system (*Reproduction: In Education, Society and Culture*, 1970, written with Passeron), the Parisian university elite (*Homo Academicus* from 1984), and social exclusion and marginalisation of the ghettos (*The Weight of the World*, 1993).

Pierre Bourdieu's book *On television* from 1996 is however, one of his more modest works adapted from a lecture presented on French television. The book is an essayistic critique of French media culture, news journalism and the symbolic power of television (Bourdieu 1998 [1996]). The underlying theoretical frame of *On Television* follows Bourdieu's general field theory, where the social (or society) are understood as a different fields that are fairly separate although related and each with their own specific logic. In this perspective, journalism can be understood as a subfield within the larger, general field of cultural production. As all other fields, the field of cultural production is partly constituted by its relations to the economic and political fields, just as the specific field of news media and news journalism. The major argument of *On Television* is that the journalistic field has lost autonomy to the economic field not least due to the commercialisation and symbolic power of television.

On Television can be criticized for not being a fulfilling academic analysis in its own right, but before putting forward such critique it is worth noticing that *On Television* was primarily written with public debate in mind. Nevertheless, the book offer interesting assumptions, relevant theoretical conceptualisations and an interesting diagnosis of the state of media and journalism in France which can serve as an inspiration for developing a contemporary media sociological framework (Schultz

2006, 2007). On top of this, there are two other interesting places to look for inspiration in order to develop an analytical strategy. The first is the work of Bourdieu on the social in general, the concept of practice, cultural production and on arts and literature, from which it is possible to develop a theoretical and methodological base for analysing the journalistic field (Bourdieu 1981, 1988 [1984], 1989, 1990 [1980], 1993, 1996, 1998, Bourdieu & Waquant 1992, Bourdieu et.al 1999 [1993]). The other sources of inspiration are applications and developments of the field perspective, done by international scholars working specifically with field theory and journalism (for instance Benson 1998, Benson & Neveu 2005, Champagne 1993, Hovden 2001, Marchetti 2005 and Schultz 2007). This paper draws on both bodies of literature and will present a framework for conceptualising and investigating context using the approach of an 'Ethnographic Field Analysis' developed in a study of Danish News Values as (Schultz 2005, 2006).

The key concepts in reflexive sociology – and for studying journalistic practice and the contextual structures that enable and constrain it - are Field, Doxa/illusio, Habitus, and Capital (Bourdieu 1998). As a simple introduction to the field perspective it might be useful to explain the key concepts using a simple game metaphor for journalism (Schultz 2007): *The journalistic field* is where the journalistic games are being played or rather the journalistic *is* the journalistic game. Looking at journalism as a *field* means understanding journalism as a semi-autonomous field with its own logics of practice as an ongoing game or struggle of defining what journalism is, what good journalism is, etc. *The Journalistic Doxa* is the necessary belief in the game, the unquestionable conviction that the journalistic game is worth playing. *News Habitus* is a specific way of playing the news game, the certain dispositions which the player (or rather, agent) has for positioning himself in the game, or more simply the embodied 'feel for the game'. *Newsroom capital* is the resources which the agent (media or journalist) has to put into the game, resources that are recognized in the field and by the other agents in the field.

With these key concepts in mind, the next section will give a short introduction to the field theory and its critical, reflexive and relational epistemology before putting the theory to work.

Context: A critical, reflexive and relational approach

The question of how to conceptualise and investigate context is a key question for ethnographers as well as other researchers interested in social practices. The question is epistemological in its nature; how can we understand the social and social action and what are the borders between the research object and its context? For sociology, and ethnographers working within the sociological tradition, the question of context can be reframed in lines with two basic queries, structure versus agency, and micro versus macro levels of investigation. Both queries point to the conceptualisation of the individual in relation to the social and to the conceptualisation of social practice. Ethnographic methods have a great advantage in achieving a phenomenological understanding of being a journalist, but at the same time, the methods are less sensitive as to the structural forces on macro level which also guide everyday journalism. It is obvious that the routines of news work, for instance the availability of sources, affects the selection and framing of news stories. It is however much more difficult to see how economic, political and cultural structures affect the decisions in the newsroom. This is where the concept of field is helpful. As the introduction to the concept suggests, the concept of field is a concept seeking to bridge the epistemological divide between agent and structure and between micro and macro. The different research projects of Bourdieu and his colleagues are conducted within the frame of reflexive sociology (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1993). But just as the term field theory covers different analytical and theoretical projects, reflexive sociology should be understood as an analytical approach, that encompasses a wide range of methodological tools.

In order to understand the concept of 'field' it is helpful to begin with the more fundamental sociological question of how to investigate and understand the social world. For Bourdieu, this question has traditionally been posed and answered from two different, often incompatible, scientific perspectives, neither of which have fully grasped the complexity of the social world nor developed sufficient theoretical tools (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, Bourdieu 2002 [1997]). The critique is pointed at on one hand what he calls the 'objectivist' position (or 'physicalism'), prominently exemplified in the work Durkheim and Marx, and on the other hand the 'subjectivist' position (or 'psychologism') which can be exemplified in the work of

Schutz but also in various phenomenological and ethnomethodological standpoints. The starting point for Bourdieu's understanding of the social world is an acknowledgment of the 'objectivist' emphasis on *structures* ('pre-notions' in the instance of Durkheim, and 'ideology' in Marx) as well as an acknowledgement of the 'subjectivist' emphasis on *constructions* ('common-sense constructs') – and a strong critique of both positions.

According to Bourdieu, the 'objectivist' sociologist treats "social facts as things" (Bourdieu 1989 p.14) thus neglecting that 'facts' are also objects of knowledge and cognition embedded in discursive practices. The 'subjectivist' sociologist on the other hand, treats the social as nothing but mere representations or constructions, neglecting the structural basis for different subjective representations, making scientific knowledge nothing but an "account of accounts" (Bourdieu 1989:15). The answer lies not in choosing either the 'objectivist' standpoint or the 'subjectivist' approach. "(...) just as subjectivism inclines one to reduce structures to visible interactions, objectivism tends to deduce actions and interactions from the structure" (Bourdieu 1989:17). What Bourdieu proposes is that sociology should include a *dialectic* relationship between the two modes of thinking. Using an overly simplifying metaphor, one could say, that social structures and subjective representations are two sides of the same coin, the social world. It is in this dialectic mode of thinking that Bourdieu develops his concept of field, trying to overcome the traditional division (oscillation) between structure vs. agency, while paying his debt to the founding fathers of sociology, to French structuralism as well as American pragmatism and phenomenology. In the quote below Bourdieu (reluctantly) answers the question of epistemological position.

"If I had to characterize my work in two words, that is, as is the fashion these days, to label it, I would speak of constructivist structuralism or of structuralist constructivism, taking the word structuralism in a sense very different from the one it has acquired in the Saussurean or Lévi-Straussian tradition. By structuralism or structuralist, I mean that there exist, within the social world itself and not only within symbolic systems (language, myths, etc.), objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their representation. By constructivism, I mean that there is a twofold social genesis, on the one hand of the schemes of perception, thought, and action which are constitutive of what I call habitus, and on the other hand of social

structures and particularly of what I call fields and of groups, notable those we ordinarily call social classes." (Bourdieu 1989:).

In his understanding of the social world, Bourdieu emphasises a *dialectic* relationship between objectivism and subjectivism, in order to overcome the "artificial opposition that is thus created between structures and representations" (Bourdieu 1989:15). One of the key tools for this manoeuvre is rising above the substantialist mode of thinking, that limits our observations of the social, to what we can intuitively recognize and make sense of, for instance 'individuals' and 'groups'. Instead of looking at what we immediately recognize as real we should look behind the substantial and identify the (counter-intuitive) *relations* between different positions in the social space. The relational aspect of Bourdieu's is a key to understanding his work, and yet at the same time, one of the reasons why he is often misread. Thinking in a relational mode means that the sociologist need to look behind the seemingly evident structural features and behind the 'taken-for-granted'- constructions of the social world, to look for the relations between different positions in the social field. In other words, it is not the positions (f.i. the elite) that interests Bourdieu, but the *relations* between the positions on a field, and the relations between a field and other fields, that are the primary object of social analysis. Social space is a system of relations, not different positions and fields. As an example, studying journalism means taking a critical look at the naturalised taken-for-granted positions in the journalistic field such as "serious newspaper" or "good journalism". The relational perspective forces the researcher to ask questions such as "Why serious", "What is serious" and "serious in relation to what" in order to draw a map of where the "serious newspaper" is placed in relation to for instance the "tabloid newspaper" or the "popular magazine". In this way the researcher can isolate and lay forward the differentiation principles and status hierarchies of the field. In the same way, "good journalism" is not perceived of as essential characteristics of texts or as certain institutionalised methods, but as a relational position in the social space of the journalistic field. "Good journalism" is good in relation to "not so good" or even "bad" journalism, and what is considered "good journalism" will change as the different relations in the field changes, for instance when newspapers are bought and sold, when new generations of journalists take over the managerial positions or when new media, such as the internet, challenges the definitions of journalism in the field.

The relational aspect of Bourdieu's theory is closely linked to his critical interest in power relations. Writing against both the objectivist and subjectivist positions in science, Bourdieu's strong interest in unravelling the power relations of the social world, is accordingly not a phenomenological interest in revealing the perceptions and realities of the powerful, neither is it a hegemonic strategy to reveal the structural basis or ideology of the powerful. With the term 'symbolic power' and the relational mode of his analytical framework, Bourdieu sets out to investigate the different power *relations* of the social space, the relations of different fields vis à vis the field of power. In "Social Space and Symbolic Power" (Bourdieu 1989) Bourdieu underlines, that missing out the relational aspect of his theory is a serious and reductionistic misreading of his theoretical position as well as his critical intent. Using *Distinction* as an example, Bourdieu explains:

"This relational mode of thinking is at the point of departure of the construction presented in Distinction. It is a fair bet, however, that the space, that is, the system of relations, will go unnoticed by the reader (...). Thus the chapter of Distinction devoted to the different fractions of the dominant class will be read as a description of the various lifestyles for these fractions, instead of an analysis of locations in the space of position of power – what I call the field of power." (Bourdieu 1989 p 16).

Bourdieu's critical interest in questions of power in the social space is an essential key to understanding his theoretical framework as well as his different analytical projects. Throughout his career, Bourdieu has sought to highlight and analyse power relations of the social world with the clearly normative agenda of showing how power relations that might seem 'natural' in fact are the (historical) outcome of different power struggles on, and between, different fields. Bourdieu stresses that sociological analysis should contribute with knowledge that go beyond our everyday understanding of the world and in this way making us more aware and more capable of reflection. But it was not before late in his career, that Bourdieu took a direct and active part in the public debate. In his early days, Bourdieu emphasised publishing research results, though often 'less academic' in style than the genre usually prescribes, but let other academics to participate in the public debate carried by the media (Schwartz 2002). With his book *The Misery of the World* (ed. Bourdieu 1993) however, Bourdieu took an active role in discussing the problems of poverty and marginalisation displayed in the book. This more direct role in the

public debate was taken to the fore in the 1990s, when Bourdieu appeared on national television with his lecture on the symbolic power of television and the influence of the economic field on the journalistic field etc, later published in *On Television*.

This section has discussed the critical, reflexive and relational epistemology of field theory. To sum up, Bourdieu offers an analytical strategy for investigating the epistemologically problematic question of context, by bridging structure and agency, micro and macro, in a relational, constructivist-structuralist approach. This makes the field perspective highly suitable as a framework for ethnographic studies. However, one of the greatest strengths of the field perspective is that it is more than a theory. It is attempt to develop empirical tools aiming towards a – critical mapping of social life and practice, as well as uncovering power relations and social institutions.

Journalistic Field, News Habitus and Newsroom Capital

Bourdieu is first and foremost an empirical scholar and his work includes studies of families, households and every day life in the Kabylia villages of Algeria (Bourdieu 1990 [1980]), as well as a critique of power based on an extensive statistical mapping of cultural dispositions, de-naturalising concepts like 'taste', in France (Bourdieu 2003 [1979]). Although Bourdieu has shown diverse empirical interests throughout his career, the concept of field has had a prominent place in Bourdieu's vast body of work.

Case: Newsroom Ethnography in a Field perspective

The key concepts of reflexive sociology - field, doxa, habitus and capital - are defined in relation to each other and very difficult to separate (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1993). Fields are first and foremost an empirical question, and the structure of a field depends on the kind, amount and distribution of capitals, which structures the possible positions of agents, etc. Nevertheless, the concepts can be isolated analytically thus made operational for empirical research.

It is important to stress, that although the field approach is very highly relevant for investigation news production, the approach is just as appropriate for investigating other journalistic subfields, such as the production of political communication (Darras 2004), as it is appropriate for investigating other related media questions, for instance the field of Public Relations, the habitus of political lobbyists or the capitals of media personalities. Also, the field theory can be used as a framework for studying media consumption, for instance the habitual patterns of media use, audience cultures and the relationship between media consumption and broader questions of social differentiation and power, as Bourdieu has schematised in *Distinction: A social critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Bourdieu 1993 [1979]).

In the article "New(s) times: Towards a 'Second Wave' of News Ethnography" Simon Cottle argues that in-depth newsroom studies, or news ethnographies, are still a relevant and needed empirical foundation for researching news production (Cottle 2000). As the title suggests, the major argument of the article is that the previous newsroom studies are part of the same theoretical family which can be considered a 'first wave of news ethnography' as the studies focus on the bureaucratic routines of news organisations (Cottle 2000). The same point has been made by Rodney Benson who also point to the limited theoretical perspective of the "organisational approaches" used in previous news production studies (Benson 1998). All though the first generation of newsroom studies has given us important insights on journalistic practice and newsworthiness from both an 'individual' perspective (i.e. White 1950), from a 'group' perspective (i.e. Breed 1956) and from an 'institutional' perspective (i.e. Tuchman 1973) the theoretical framework has still predominantly been that of organisational studies. From the critical, reflexive and relational standpoint of field theory it is important that the analytical framework used to investigate news production opens up to include broader questions of journalism and culture, journalism and economy, power, politics, etc. The challenge for a possible second generation of newsroom studies is to conceptualise all three levels of analysis within the same theoretical framework in order to overcome the theoretical limitations (and methodological inference problems) of earlier studies. Cottle draws on a field perspective suggesting investigating 'news ecology':

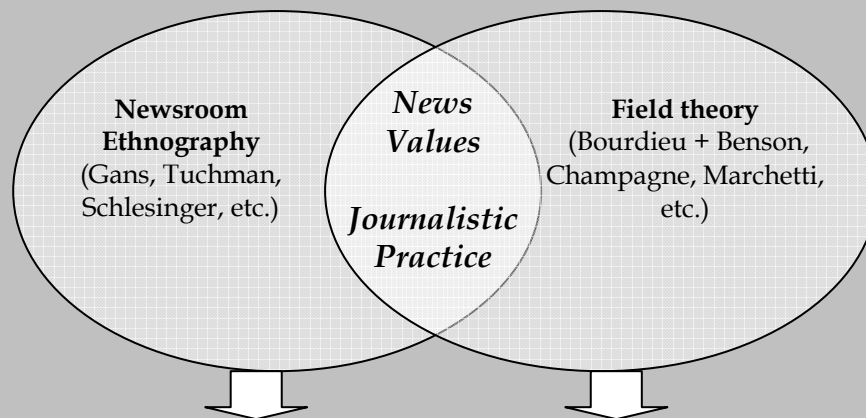
"The term 'news ecology' helps to signal a) the under-theorised, and ethnographically under-explored, dimension of news differentiation, and b) how this is constituted important respects by a system of

internally defined relations of difference – differences that are consciously monitored and reproduced by practicing journalists both as means of managing personal career moves within and across the field, but also as a professional means of reproducing specific forms of news as required” (Cottle 2003: 19)

What the two traditions of ethnography and reflexive sociology have in common is not least an empirical interest in social practice and differentiation of values which in the case of media sociology can be translated into research questions on *journalistic practice* and *news values*. This is illustrated in the model below, where Newsroom Ethnography overlaps Field theory.

The model below illustrates the methodology of the ethnographic field analysis used in a study of Danish News Values and news culture (Schultz 2005, 2006, 2007). The research strategy aimed at bridging the methodological and empirical insights from the traditional *newsroom studies* (Schudson 1989, Berkowitz 1993, Cottle 2000) with the historical, structural and relational perspectives of field theory and *reflexive sociology* of Pierre Bourdieu. The key analytical concepts of the ethnographic field approach is ‘journalistic field’, ‘journalistic doxa’, ‘news habitus’ and ‘newsroom capitals’. The concepts are defined in the model and will be discussed below.

Methodology:



Journalistic Field: A field is a semi-autonomous micro-cosmos with its own logics of practice. The journalistic field is the site for the journalistic game, the constant battles over dominant definitions of journalism, or rather, the journalistic field *is* the journalistic game.

Journalistic Doxa/Illusio The implicit, tacit presuppositions of the journalistic field (for instance the practical understanding of "newsworthiness" or the dominance of "timeliness"). The unquestionable belief in the journalistic game.

News Habitus: A practical mastering of the daily news game, a specific way of playing the game (for instance "correspondent habitus" and "arts journalist habitus")

Journalistic Capital The internal currency of the journalistic field. The cultural capital of the field (prestige, autonomy, internal recognition among peers) as opposed to the economic capital of the field (money, etc.).

Newsroom Capitals A subform of journalistic capital which structures the positions in the newsroom (for instance the amount and kind of experience, awards, track record, beat, education, etc.)

Journalistic Field

In *The Field of Cultural Production*, Bourdieu narrows in on theoretical definition of the field by discussing another field within the field of cultural production, the 'literary field', hand in hand with the 'writer'.

What do I mean by 'field'? As I use the term, a field is a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy. The existence of the writer, as fact and as value, is inseparable from the existence of the literary field as an autonomous universe endowed with specific principles of evaluation of practices and works. To understand Flaubert or Baudelaire, or any writer, major or minor, is first of all to understand what the status of writer consists of at the moment considered; that is, more precisely, the social conditions of the possibility of this social function, of this social personage. In fact, the invention of the writer, in the modern sense of the term, is inseparable from the progressive invention of a particular social game, which I term the literary field and which is constituted as it establishes its autonomy, that is to say, its specific laws of functioning, within the field of power. (Bourdieu 1993 p163)

In the quote above, Bourdieu speaks of the 'field' as both a 'separate social universe' and a 'particular social game'. In other places in the book he speaks of fields as 'fields of forces', as 'sites of struggles', and as 'spaces of possibles' (Bourdieu 1998). Whatever term is used in order to describe the specific functioning of the fields, it should be noted that these are always *dynamic* terms. Although somewhat stable in a historical perspective, fields are never static, but in constant change as positions change, thus changing the relations within field.

To speak of a field is to name this microcosm, which is also a social universe, but a social universe freed from a certain number of the constraints that characterize the encompassing social universe, a universe that is somewhat apart, endowed with its own laws, its own nomos, its own law of functioning, without being completely independent of the external laws. (Bourdieu 2005:33)

How is it possible to use the concept of field to investigate context? The study of Danish News Values discussed both the 'internal laws' of the Danish journalism field as well as the 'external laws' of the social space. For instance, the ethnographic material pointed towards the fact that the objectivity norm is an important norm of the Danish journalistic field (Schultz 2005). This was for instance apparent in interviews but from observations and in journalism texts books. This conclusion might have been sufficient in an ethnographic study, but in a field perspective the objectivity norm needs to be contextualised. From a field perspective we must assume, that the objectivity norm which appear in the predominantly Anglo-

American studies (i.e. Tuchman 1972, Schudson 2001) are not the same as the objectivity norm visible in Danish newsrooms. First, because the field theory will assume that the social space (or 'society') of America and Denmark are different in terms of population, culture, history, social systems etc. Second, because the field theory will assume that the journalistic fields (or Media Systems, Hallin & Mancini 2004) of America and Denmark will be different in terms of press commercialisation, media policy, trade union history etc. Thirdly, because field theory assumes that journalism is part of the field of power and part of the field of cultural production (Benson 1998) which means that any norm, for instance the objectivity norm, is not an essential value or a neutral method, but a powerful discursive practice (making some stories and angles visible while neglecting others). In other words, the practices and norms visible to ethnographers can be contextualised in relation to the journalistic profession (the journalistic field), in relation to power (the field of cultural production and the field of power) and in relation to questions of economy, politics and culture (the 'social' field in question for instance country) using the perspective of field theory.

So what are the methodological implications?: For the ethnographer the concept of field is a possibility of conceptualising context. Using the field as an analytical tool is a possibility of bridging micro- and macro levels of investigation thus overcoming the methodological inference problem of earlier newsroom studies where the ethnographers rarely had tools to investigate the political-economy of journalism or the wider cultural implications on the daily practices of journalists.

Journalistic Doxa/Illusio

Fields are first and foremost empirical questions just at the question of the relationship between agent and field. "To exist in a field (...) is to differentiate oneself" (Bourdieu 2005:39) or put more simply, to exist in a field is to play the game of the field and to make a difference by playing. But in order to play the game you need an unquestionable belief that the game is worth playing. This is illustrated by the concept of doxa/ illusion.

Doxa is the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a habitus and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for granted of the world that flows from practical sense. (Bourdieu 1990 [1980]:68).

Doxa are the conventions we don't question, the deeply rooted tacit understandings of the world which are difficult to express in words or the everyday circumstances that are so naturalised that we don't see them. There are two overall forms of doxa, a general and a specific doxa. We can speak of a general doxa related to the social space and thus all the field (Bourdieu 1998:57). For western societies this doxa could be for instance be consumption or capitalism, which to a high degree are experienced as given, almost 'natural', orders of modern societies but nevertheless are social orders historically created by social, cultural, economic and political institutions. We can also speak of a specific doxa, the doxa of a certain field. This specific doxa can be understood as 'a system of pre-suppositions inherent in the membership of a field' (Bourdieu 2005:37).

How does the ethnographer investigate doxa/illusio? Danish news journalism has operated with five so called 'news criteria' in at least thirty years: Timeliness, Relevance, Identification, Conflict and Sensation. The criteria have been reproduced in textbooks since the at least the early 1970s and have been taught at the journalism school for just as many years. The five criteria are highly institutionalised, formalised and appeared in most interviews about news selection and newsworthiness. Thus it would be tempting to conclude that the five criteria are the dominant news values of Danish journalism. However, the field perspective assumes that this kind of formalised, explicated norms are only part of the values of a field, the orthodox news values, whereas there will also be more invisible and doxic values at (Schultz 2006). From observations of editorial conferences and interviews about the social relations of the journalistic field, it became apparent that many other news values were at play. Most importantly, the studied isolated 'Exclusivity' as the sixth news criteria. This finding relates to the concept of doxa because the journalistic practices in relation to getting a story that the competitor does not have, getting source that the other newspapers have not used, or pictures that the other tv station is not in position of, are part of the un-spoken taken-for-granted values of journalism. For instance an editor was interviewed by a group of students after the study came out as a book, and referring to this the editor said:

"Naturally, the most important thing for us is to have our own stories on the front page, but I disagree with the book, Exclusivity is not one of our news criteria"

On the one hand the editor clearly recognises the deeply rooted journalistic practice of wanting to have a story exclusively, but on the other hand, Exclusivity is not recognised as a news criteria or news value. This small example points to fact that there is important land to be covered between the explicit values, norms and practices of a field, and the implicit values, norms and practices which we can understand in light of the concept of doxa/illusion.

So what are the methodological implications?: The analytical concept of doxa/illusion urges the ethnographer to look for the tacit pre-suppositions of a field and for the taken-for granted knowledge of social practice. It is not least in this level of questioning where the critical ambition and practical potential of field theory is evident: For reflexive sociology, an important *raison-d'être* is to push the borders for doxa and lay forward the unwritten rules of the social, thus making agents more aware and reflected about their practice.

News Habitus

The concept of habitus might best illustrate how the field perspective bridges agency and structure, micro and macro. In the quote below, Bourdieu speaks of the habitus as a structuring structure (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 126).

“The habitus is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes” (Bourdieu, 2003(1999: 179).

The quote captures the social condition that we as individuals experience “freedom” and “independency” in our actions, yet at the same time, we are the products of specific social, economic and cultural conditions and histories. “Individual choice” is a relative and relational thing – for social practice in general as well as for journalistic practice.

The structuring structure of the habitus is not least a bodily experience. In the quote below, Bourdieu uses the metaphor of having a feel for the game as a way of explaining what the habitus is and how it works:

"Having a feel for the game is having the game under the skin; it is to master in a practical way the future of the game; it is to have a sense of the history of the game (...). The good player is the one who anticipates, who is ahead of the game. Why can she get ahead of the flow of the game? Because she has the immanent tendencies of the game in her body, in an incorporated state: she embodies the game." (Bourdieu, 1998: 81f).

Habitus is a conceptual tool for analysing how social agents have different positions in the social space, and how these serve as different dispositions for social action. It is possible to speak of a secondary or "professional habitus" as mastering of a specific, professional game in a specific professional field (Schultz 2007). The journalistic habitus is such a secondary, professional habitus. In the quote below, a Danish news editor explains what a good news story is. The quote illustrates how the journalistic habitus is a bodily knowledge based on practice and experience:

For me it has to do with a feeling. Can I picture the story? Can I see the headline? Then I'll believe in the story. (Danish editor, 2003)

Journalistic habitus thus implies understanding the journalistic game, and being able to master the rules of that same game. But the game can be played from different positions, and different dispositions point to different forms of mastering the game (see also Bourdieu, 1998/1996: 26). Journalists will be able to position themselves to a certain extent but always within the structures of the social space which surrounds him (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 2003/1999). In this way we can assume that there will be different positions in the field and that journalistic autonomy will depend on this (Bourdieu, 2005; Marchetti, 2005).

How can habitus be investigated by the ethnographer? Theoretically speaking it is possible to imagine that there will be more specific forms of journalistic habitus within journalistic fields, such as "editorial habitus", a "reporter habitus" or an "intern habitus" but also forms of journalistic habitus differentiated according to journalistic genres such as a "foreign correspondent habitus", an "investigative reporter habitus", forms of habitus according to media "magazine habitus", "newspaper habitus", "television habitus", etc. Different forms of habitus can help to explain seemingly different or even contradictory practices in the newsroom. For the news ethnographer it is a common observation that some journalists have more

autonomy and influence on selecting, producing and presenting a story, than other journalists. Also it is common knowledge that working on some beats is a better career move than working other beats. These differences can be explained in terms of different professional habitus.

So what are the methodological implications? The analytical concept of habitus is an important tool for the ethnographer who wants to look at relations in the social space, who are interested in questions of differentiation and of power and in questions of social agency. Not least through the notion of habitus, reflexive sociology helps us to conceptualise the social space of for instance journalism as a hierarchical, social space and not only as a singularity of for instance 'journalism culture'.

Newsroom Capital

Journalistic capital can be defined as the symbolic capital of the journalistic field, just as academic capital would be the symbolic capital of the field of academics (see also Bourdieu 2005, Marchetti 2005 & Marlière 1998). Journalistic capital is a form of capital closely connected to the concept of peer-recognition. Having a lot of journalistic capital means having a lot of respect from journalistic colleagues and having a good position internally in the journalistic hierarchy. Journalistic capital can be material as well as immaterial. A journalistic award can be a very material award, whereas praise from a colleague, a pat on the shoulder or an appreciative remark in the newsroom can be seen as signs of immaterial symbolic capital. Journalistic capital can be changed into economic capital, for instance, when a journalist gets a pay raise or a promotion. Journalistic capital, however, can also be found in the small details of everyday newsroom practice, for instance, when a journalist gets a little extra time to work on his story, or he gets the best photographer or the most interesting interview, etc. We must also assume that there are many different forms of competing journalistic capital in a field at any given time. Different forms of capital are the key to understanding the distribution of agents in the social space. Bourdieu point to economic capital as one of the two most dominant forms of capital, the other being cultural capital which will be different from field to field (Bourdieu, 1998). Journalistic capital can be understood as the specific, cultural capital of the journalistic field.

How can the ethnographer use the concept of capitals in order to study context? Fredrik Hovden has investigated the educational capital of Norwegian journalism students (Hovden, 2001). In the same way, it is also possible to speak of other forms of what could be termed *newsroom capitals* which serve as important capitals in regard to editorial prestige and symbolic capital in the newsroom (Schultz 2007). These editorial capitals are for instance professional experience (years of work experience, kind of experience, etc.), "formal" organisational position (reporter or editor, general reporter or specialist reporter, etc.), news beat (political news or human interest news, etc.), journalistic prizes, etc. (Schultz 2005, 2006). The type and amount of editorial capital of the individual agent and the total distribution of capital in a field will constitute the habitus.

And the methodological implications? The analytical concept of capital offers a tool for understanding why the social space is differentiated as it is, but more importantly, the concept of capitals highlights what the internal status hierarchies are in a given field and what recognition principles that are dominant in a field. Empirical investigations of capitals are most often statistical (i.e. Bourdieu 2003 [1979]) but just as a quantitative approach can be used for studying journalistic capitals (i.e. Hovden 2001) it is possible to use the concept of capital as a qualitative research tool (Schultz 2005, 2006).

Discussion

What are the advantages and disadvantages for the ethnographer using a field perspective – and the concepts of field, doxa/illusion, habitus and capital – to understand and investigate context?

The biggest advantage is a consistent, theoretical framework with analytical concepts highly applicable in empirical research. Another advantage is the theoretical and empirical bridging of the micro-practices visible for the ethnographer in for instance newsrooms, and the macro-practices which are often invisible structures outside of the ethnographers analytical perspective. Also, on both an epistemological, theoretical and analytical level, the field perspective is first and foremost an empirical approach just as media ethnography and newsroom studies.

The biggest disadvantage for the ethnographer is that fields are “research tools” (Bourdieu 2005:30) and therefore prescribes rather elaborate methodological demands in terms of both epistemology (i.e. object-objectification (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) and participant-objectification (Bourdieu 2003)) and empirical depth. However, as the case of the ethnographic field approach hopefully has shown, it is possible to use field theory as a perspective in combination with other analytical strategies thus developing a more flexible analytical strategy loyal to reflexive sociology.

From a more normative position it should be noted that the reflexive approach of field theory has important critical potential for both media ethnography and newsroom ethnography. Making invisible structures of power and recognition visible through ethnographic field studies, has the potential of making media audiences, journalists and researchers more reflexive about the contexts of media.

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