

Papers presented at the SCUD-meeting October 26-28 2008, Aalborg (Sæby), Denmark

Virgílio Borges Pereira

The formation of the space of the dominant classes in Porto - Exploratory remarks on the socio-economical, cultural and symbolic -ideological variations of privilege in Porto

Pereira presented a paper with some key findings from his and his colleagues' comprehensive study of Porto between 1998-2004 (see e.g. Perieira 2005). The paper especially focused on: 1) understanding the dynamics of dominant class formation which characterise Porto's social space, where a broader range of economic, social and cultural resources are concentrated. 2) based on the identification of the most relevant properties of the field of power under analysis, attempt to briefly develop an internal sociological view of the structure of its agents' daily life, as well as their representations. And finally 3), from an exploratory perspective, an interpretative and theoretically informed overview is put forward, insights on the relationships between the formation of the social divisions identified within the city's dominant social space and their symbolic and ideological counterparts.

Pereira, Virgílio Borges (2005): *Classes e culturas de classe das famílias portuenses. Classes sociais e modalidades de estilização da vida na cidade do Porto*, Porto: Afrontamento.

Elizabeth Silva & Alan Warde (with Mike Savage, not present)

A preliminary version of "Accounting for Class"

The paper discusses some of the important uncertainties in the recent "identity turn" in class analysis. Drawing on the rich survey and qualitative material generated as part of the *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion* study allows them to provide an unusually comprehensive exploration of this issue. In conclusion it is argued that:

1) It is indeed clear that class is definitely a minority response to self-identity as part of a collective social class in the classic sociological sense, especially if this is linked to a clear and direct class politics. Only the Welsh working-class exhibits this kind of political class consciousness. Most people, from all social groups, present ambivalent accounts of class position and location. However, we should not over-emphasize the absence of class awareness. A lot of people are still prepared to "name and claim" class. Moreover, other possible forms of identification - with gender and generation especially - emerge no more explicitly from the discursive exchanges upon which we report. Ethnicity and sexuality appeared to be more insistent and salient in claims to identity.

2) We follow Bourdieu and Skeggs in seeing the social structuring of "don't knows" as highly significant and as worthy of sustained analysis. In most cases, other than perhaps some of the "oblivious" type of individuals, people recognize that they live in an unequal social world. This animates many people's sensitivity to a wider politics of positioning and classification in which they are keen to find mechanisms to put themselves outside social labels, whether by effacing them, parodying them, providing mobility stories to explain how they are transitional between them, and so forth. We hence see ambivalence not as the product of confusion or ignorance, but actively and creatively produced, a means of elaborating a distinctive social identity which recognizes the pervasiveness of inequality.

3) Whereas much of the literature focuses on working class dis-identification, we have ample evidence of similar processes amongst the middle classes and elites. Those who have benefited most from the remaking of neo-liberal capitalism often seek to efface their own distinctive privileges, for instance by apparently being oblivious to hierarchy. We have also shown that many people continue to think it is not quite legitimate to claim a middle class identity. Working class identification remains the norm amongst our survey sample, and a few working class people continue to take pride in seeing themselves as working class. We see the politics of classification as affecting people - though differently - across the social hierarchy.

4) We have suggested that in order to develop a fuller analysis of contemporary class identities, we need to go beyond the concept of class dis-identification or mis-recognition. Clearly, this concept was vital in allowing a sophisticated account of class identities to be developed. However, it suffers from the potential problem of assuming a "deficit" view of identity, in which it is the lack of an obvious class awareness that is emphasized. Following feminist arguments about identity, we instead think it is more useful to focus on the mechanisms by which even ambivalent and hesitant identities are manufactured and defined. We suggest that our typology which distinguishes three types of between "lack of awareness", "obliviousness" and "refusal of classification" is a way to understand how people come to terms with uncomfortable aspects of the phenomenon of social class. We think that this typology allows us to distinguish different social blocs - those lacking awareness often being ethnic minorities, those who are oblivious being secure and privileged, and those who refuse classification being characterized by high cultural capital but lesser economic capital. At the same time we need to recall that the most common condition is one of recognition of the relevance in some circumstances of the existence of class differences.

5) We offer something of a warning about the generalisability of our analysis.

- Perhaps class identity is at its least salient when dealing with issues of taste.
- We didn't have interviews with young white working class women to thoroughly check Skeggs' interpretation of dis-identification. We are inclined to believe that such dis-identification, which would fall into the "oblivious" category in our typology - where class is recognized but not named or talked about - would also characterize part of the working class.
- We should be aware that interviews and focus groups seem to produce different emphases in relation to discourses of class, suggesting that the salience of class can be differently captured according to the context of talk.

Annick Prieur, Lennart Rosenlund, Jakob Skjøtt-Larsen

Cultural Capital Today: A Case Study from Denmark (Published in *Poetics* Vol. 36(1) 2008, pp. 45-71)

Based on Danish survey data subjected to correspondence analysis, the paper aims at carrying out a critical assessment of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social differentiation in advanced societies as a multidimensional phenomenon. As his theory goes, capital volume (economic + cultural capital) and capital composition (the relative weight of the two) are the main dimensions of social differentiation, which structure the space of social positions as well as the space of lifestyles. The

central discussion of the article concerns the character of cultural capital, and the role it plays in the formation of social divisions. This leads to a discussion of four core questions: first, are there signs of a strong individualism and, correspondingly, a weak social structuring of lifestyles? The study does not find support for this view. Second, does classical highbrow culture play a central role as a marker of distinction? Cultural capital in a contemporary Danish context appears to be less related to traditional highbrow cultural consumption than in Bourdieu's studies in France some decades ago. Third, is there a rise in the omnivorousness and tolerant taste within the cultural elite? This study answers negatively, as those adhering to the preferences that are most typical for the cultural elite tend to simultaneously avoid or mark distance to popular expressions of taste. Fourth, are there traces of new forms of cultural capital? The study uncovers a cleavage between a global orientation or a form of cosmopolitanism or "connectedness", on the one hand, and a local and traditional orientation on the other. The conceptualisation of such differences are questioned, however, as current sociology appears to conceptualise social divisions rather systematically in ways that automatically euphemise the orientation of intellectuals towards the world.

Keijo Rahkonen & Semi Purhonen (with Jukka Gronow, not present)

Social Differentiation of Musical and Literary Taste Patterns in Finland (Published afterwards in "Research on Finnish Society" Vol. 2 (2009) pp 39-49:

http://www.finnresearch.fi/7_purhonen_et_al_2009.pdf)

This paper is a part of the major Finish research project "Cultural Capital and Social Differentiation in Contemporary Finland: An International Comparison". The paper aims at contributing to the lively sociological discussion on cultural consumption and taste differences. Drawing upon a recently collected nationally representative survey data, the analysis focuses on two cultural areas: music and literature. Both areas are analysed in terms of likes and dislikes of different cultural genres following the four step analytical strategy. First, the distributions of liking/disliking of different music and literary genres are examined. Second, each genre is analysed according to five background variables: gender, age, education, income and residential area. Thirdly, it is examined how the genres are interrelated, and fourth, how interrelating genres condensed into a different taste patterns can be explained by the background variables. In addition, a short analysis of the connections between the taste patterns across the two cultural areas is done. Results suggest clear social differentiation in taste patterns both in the case of music and literature in Finland. Age and especially gender proved to be at least as important as education in explaining musical and literary taste patterns in general and highbrow taste in particular. Three major correlations - representing "highbrow", "popular folk" and "popular action" tastes - across the two cultural areas were found, indicating clear homologies between musical and literary taste.

Johs Hjellbrekke & Olav Korsnes

The Geometry of the Norwegian Electoral Space

In this presentation Hjellbrekke and Korsnes presented some preliminary findings using MCA to study Norwegian voting behaviour, based on the electoral survey that has been performed at every general election in Norway since 1957, with questions on political attitudes, party affiliation, social status, social and geographical background. The main research questions were: What is the dimensionality of the space? Where are the parties' mean modality points located in this space? For what parties do we find the most significant relocations between 1997 and 2001? Are the differences between the parties' locations and relocations statistically significant? How many

clusters of voters can be identified within this multidimensional space? Due to only a few indicators of cultural capital, no indicators on social capital and very few indicators on economic capital, the main emphasis of the study is on the relation between occupational position and voting behaviour and the relation between educational level and voting behaviour.

Simone Scherger: Cultural participation, class and age

Approaching a complex relationship

In this presentation Scherger presented statistical analysis on data from the British "Taking Part" survey commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Arts Council of England and other cultural agencies which contains comprehensive information on participation in arts activities, attendance in arts events, in sports, heritage culture, museums, libraries, archives, and in other fields. The data contains a representative sample of the English population (outside institutional accommodation) from age 16 on: approximately 28,000 interviews.

Scherger's statistical analysis indicates that:

- (1) service classes being from more diverse background than ever before → cultural standards "soften", declining "status-payoff" of highbrow cultural practice
- (2) multiplied ways of spending one's leisure time; in particular, home entertainment and TV (cohort/socialisation *and* period effect)
- (3) increasing time pressures in daily life (period *and* cohort effect)
- (4) cultural change: "democratisation", "multiculturalism", "greater inclusivity", "anti-authoritarian mood", "self experience and self development" (cohort effect) → Applicable to different fields of participation to different degrees

Helene Snee

Cultural Capital and the Gap Year Experience: travel, self-development and taste.

Snee presented the frame of her doctoral thesis on young people using gap year(s) between attaining their A-levels and starting University for self-development. The basic question was whether this gap would serve them as a kind of cultural capital.

Riee Heikkillä (& Nina Kahma, not present)

The Finnish focus group study and household interviews

In this joint presentation Heikkillä presented some interesting methodological tales from their respective experiences doing household interviews for their doctoral thesis within the finish research project "Cultural Capital and Social Differentiation in Contemporary Finland: An International Comparison".

It was very clear that the topic of class is a highly sensitive topic in contemporary Finland. The two researchers were often faced with anger and resentment when trying to grasp the everyday experience of class in contemporary Finland. Class is clearly a topic non grata in contemporary Finland.

Bruno Jose Monteiro

An ethnography of the lived experience of class. Dimmed sights, poisoned feelings and ineffable injuries: some aspects of the working class everyday life in times of «crisis».

Drawing on an extensive ethnographic fieldwork in the Portuguese city of Rebordosa - a city going through a rough economic transformation causing unemployment and substantial insecurity among working class people occupying economically and symbolically marginalised positions in the social space - the paper closely examines how the simultaneous economical crisis and symbolic devaluation of the working class translate into bodily feelings of mistrust, distress, permanent exhaustion, insomnia, anxiety, indignation, envy, shame, worthlessness ect., because the working class incorporate their increasingly deprived social position. What stands out in the working class discourse, generally in an intermittent and fragmented way, is a kind of visceral evocation that, in a figurative and literal sense, leads to lending substance, *to give a body*, to the attempts to confer coherence on the social transformations.

In this context people are "all going for one another". This dehumanisation of interpersonal forms makes personal existence vulnerable, precisely because manual workers, because of that double ineptitude, tend to adjust to the image that is sent back in every situation in which they face the depreciation or denial of the value and relevance of their practices and their discourse. "Shame" and "embarrassment" are the most frequent manifestations of situations in which the sense of place and, concomitantly, the authorized limits in the words and in the actions of each social agent are overstepped. The feeling of outrage acts as a "self-fulfilling prophecy" through which "the fear becomes a reality". Through exercises in oblivion ("we try to forget so we don't think too much", "it's better to not even talk about it" "don't remind me!") an attempt is made to inhibit or reduce the dissonance born from the "awareness" or intuition of insignificance.

The tendencies of social restructuring brought unwanted situations and symptoms of social inequality and bestowed on "money" a centrality that makes the maintenance of the principles of gratitude and disinterest characteristic of symbolic exchanges infeasible. The acquisition of social visibility, hence, of socially recognised value, depends, namely, on the possession and flaunting of guarantees - socially recognised - that secure "social esteem". The possibility of accessing these forms of recognition seem to be exclusively conditioned by access to "money", understood as an omnipotent social force.

The perverse feeling of the dissemination of malice and envy throughout the community accompanies the growing improbability in the maintenance of the forms of recognition accessible to the working classes, such as work or domestic sustainability. These are all crucial dimensions in the social experiences structured by and constituting the processes of practical, historical and everyday (re) production of the working class.

Nobumi Kobayashi

Symbolic violence through cool brands: The case of Burberry and Muji in Britain.

The paper argues that Bourdieu's argument in his *Distinction* regarding the relationship between lifestyle and formation of social classes is quite applicable in certain consumption practices in contemporary Britain. The paper focus on the findings from Kobayashi-Hillary's research into media representations of designer brand *Burberry* and "cult" brand *Muji* in Britain. Some luxury

brands are widely recognised as status symbols for the wealthy and successful, and many brands do appear to function as markers of social distinction.

The paper demonstrates that choice in terms of what brands to consume is often not as free as it appears. Burberry and *Muji* offer unique insights into different types of symbolic struggles that take place through consumption of brands. On one hand, in the case of Burberry, the struggle can be seen as an all out war fought publicly. On the other, in the case of Muji, it can be described as a cold war that is subtle, but still powerful.

In both cases, journalists are seen trying to draw boundaries regarding who should/not consume certain brands, which actually follows what Bourdieu has suggested earlier; the dominant class is struggling to "impose" its own principle to control the legitimacy of judgment of taste (1986). As he argues, it is clear that tastes for the brands are used as practical affirmation of an "inevitable difference" (1986:56). Moreover, in the case of Burberry, the dominant class portrays the tastes of the dominated as "purely negatively", by denying them totally (1986:56). Therefore, Bourdieu claims: "aversion to different life-styles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between the classes" (1986:56). In this way, the vertical social distinction is confirmed and maintained.