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# A Strange Defeat: The Reception of Pierre Bourdieu's Works in Russia

by Alexander Bikbov

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The reception of Pierre Bourdieu's works in a particular national field can be seen, from a distance, as a process related to the history of ideas. We may describe the sequence of translations and discussions of Bourdieu's work as well as the intellectual attitudes held in common by a faction of scholars that incline them to the swift appropriation of Bourdieu's sociology. We should also describe the intellectual attitudes and schemes present in the national context that encumber positive reception of the new explanatory model. This kind of basic intellectual cartography is not at all a fruitless endeavor, but it requires additional dimension to be introduced in order to discover the social and professional circumstances that make individual scholars and scientific factions more or less sensitive to Bourdieu's modus of explanation. The bond between a nationally accessible range of intellectual options and the social circumstances that lead to their appropriation and development constitutes the first plane of reception analysis.

The second plane pertains to the means used to transfer an explanatory model from one national context to another. That is, when eventual users, including newcomers to the field, i.e. doctoral students and young scholars, obtain access to Bourdieu's works in their "domestic" environment, who exactly mediates this transfer? What basic models and intellectual accessories are employed to effect this transfer? These questions touch on the social properties and professional strategies of ardent intermediaries and established groupings with a stake in the promotion of their intellectual patron. They also concern the way the works thus promoted are inscribed

into sociological education and intellectual fashion so as to make them accessible to a wider population that includes extra-disciplinary users. To understand the process and the outcomes of Bourdieu's reception in Russia we have to situate ourselves between these two planes. Their superposition leads us to what is probably the key question: if we take into account locally dominant models of social explanation and professional practice, how does the use of Bourdieu's work impact the "normal" career of a researcher, professor or translator?

In fact, this dual-plane analysis scheme develops Bourdieu's own propositions [Bourdieu 2002] on understanding reception mechanisms: first and foremost, the way the imported work is interpreted depends on the local context. In our particular case, the difference is generated by the peripheral character of Russian sociology as recognized by locals themselves,<sup>1</sup> by its protracted disconnect from the French and wider international intellectual contexts, and by the profound gap that divides holders of administrative capital from holders of scientific capital per se. As a whole, French and Russian sociology structures were not and are not homologous.<sup>2</sup> The exemplary success of Bourdieu's works in other national contexts was not replicated in Russia in a similar way, by similar agents and institutions. This article, therefore, does not privilege homology in its staging of reception analysis; instead, I pay greater attention to the interaction of Bourdieu's promoters and receptors with/in local intellectual context as well as to the effects this interaction has produced. Since I am aware of the scale of the complete picture, I do not pretend to give a full account of this reception. I present some crucial elements while trying to take advantage of the particularities in the Russian case in order to outline certain universally valid reception patterns that might be less visible in other cases.

## Initial Horizon

We should first consider the belated arrival of Bourdieu's works in Russia. Prior to the early 1990s, they had neither adherents nor opponents in Russia due to the almost complete absence of even the most basic information about them. Before the Soviet Union's political and geographical borders were opened, in the late 1980s, not only translations but also Bourdieu's name itself were absent from the Russophone intellectual context, be it in the form of dictionaries, manuals on empirical research methods or theoretical studies falling under the rubric "critique of bourgeois sociol-

<sup>1</sup> Thereby the place in the international intellectual hierarchies is fixed in advance.

<sup>2</sup> This is premise on which Bourdieu founds his analysis of the hierarchically comparable and structurally similar French and German intellectual fields.

ogy.”<sup>3</sup> One unique albeit revealing exception was translation of a monograph dealing with French political system and French establishment [Birnbaum *et al.* 1981] where several voluminous articles by Bourdieu and his younger colleagues were deferentially referenced and abundantly cited [Bourdieu *et al.* 1970; Bourdieu *et al.* 1971; Bourdieu *et al.* 1973; Bourdieu *et al.* 1976; Bourdieu *et al.* 1978].<sup>4</sup> Abounding with details almost incomprehensible because of the lack of context, the book immediately entered the “regionalist” sector of Soviet political studies of “Western bourgeois class,” which did not intersect with Soviet sociology; sociologists were thus unaware of it. These articles remained unknown ten years later: Fridrikh Filippov, leading Soviet sociologist of education did not mention any of them in his survey of the French education system [Filippov 1990]. although most of them had described, among other phenomena, elitist Higher Schools. Although Filippov’s survey mentions that Bourdieu is “one of the recognized leaders of the French sociology of education,” it references only one specific article, “L’école conservatrice” [Bourdieu 1966], and only in order to inform readers that “the son of a high-ranking manager has twenty-four times more chances to enter university than the son of an agricultural worker.” This mention was a far cry from a proper introduction to Bourdieu’s method. The same survey pays much greater attention to three books by Raymond Boudon, in particular, *L’Inégalité des chances* [Bourdou 1973], referred to in the survey as a “semi-classic;” as well as to Lucie Tanguy and Viviane Isambert-Jamati (who, according to Filippov, is “one of the best-known authors” on the subject).

Bourdieu’s works were invisible for the Soviet sociologists who entered the discipline in the 1950s and 1960s and held their positions until the 1990s or the present decade. This happened because political circumstances were turned into intellectual preferences. The key context where new explanatory models could be and were integrated throughout the late Soviet period was a compromise formation of historical materialism, as derived from Marx, and structural functionalism, as derived from Talcott Parsons. In the 1960s, the name of Parsons marked a new beginning for Soviet sociology: it was then that emerging young professionals tacitly pitted structural functionalism against the dominant Marxist orthodoxy whose roots were in the pre-

<sup>3</sup> The “critique of bourgeois theory” became a successfully institutionalized and popular sub-discipline of the Soviet social sciences and humanities in the early 1960s. Texts belonging to this category featured extensive commentary of an “alien” theory that also included a detailed rendering of the theory itself. Such critiques thus served Soviet scholars as their principal source of knowledge on developments in international science and scholarship.

<sup>4</sup> “Le patronat” (published in French in 1978) was cited with approval by political scientist Igor Bunin in his postface to the Russian edition of the book.

vicious (Stalinist) period.<sup>5</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, these two models were successfully woven together within a unique “systemic approach,” not least thanks to the affinity both models had for an extremely generalized style, a politically safe conceptual emptiness, and the vision of society as a uniform whole. The complementary models and practical findings legitimate for Soviet sociology during the 1970s were those of Robert K. Merton, Paul Lazarsfeld, or Charles Osgood,<sup>6</sup> whereas ethnomethodology, the Frankfurt School approach or microsociology were condemned as “subjectivism doomed to failure.” They remained in the highly restricted though academically noble realm of pure annotation and theoretical (“critical”) commentary.<sup>7</sup>

Regardless of the aspirations of Soviet sociology’s headliners, their clear predilection for the American contemporary “mandarins” like Parsons or Lazarsfeld was conditioned by the crucial fact that their sparse and, indeed, tangible international interactions were in many respects limited to the World Congresses of Sociology, which were dominated by American sociology and viewed as an arena of political competition by the Soviet authorities.<sup>8</sup> These political considerations served as a virtual *raison d’être* for academic sociology in the Soviet Union. They were decisive for its institutional foundations: the Soviet Sociological Association, created in 1958 to represent the USSR at the Congresses, appeared much earlier than the first research institute (in 1968). This determined the proliferation of a particular sensibility toward grand theory among the new generation of sociologists, who came of age during a period of markedly “peaceful competition” between the two political systems. The versions of foreign sociology most easily assimilated thus came from the mainstream of the Soviet Union’s principal ideological and military adversary. While France was neither an obvious enemy nor a real ally, poor knowledge of the actual French context

<sup>5</sup> Cf. an interview with one of the key figures in Parsons reception, Iuri Levada [1999]. We should also note that during the reconstitution period of French sociology (1940s-1960s), which was largely inspired by the successful American models, Parsons was one of the privileged targets of criticism, a critique especially engaged in by Georges Gurvitch [Marcel 2004]. This discrediting, along with the existing properly French global explanatory models (such as that proposed by Lévi-Strauss), makes it easier to understand why subsequent generations of French sociologists were insensitive to the work of Parsons. Whereas its positive reception in the Soviet sociology was decisive for the discipline’s reconstitution.

<sup>6</sup> Boudon’s analysis, corresponding to functionalist common sense, clearly fits this bill better than Bourdieu’s, which is oriented towards epistemological rupture.

<sup>7</sup> One of the most representative and cited collections of this kind is Ossipov [1977].

<sup>8</sup> Soviet delegations, composed initially of orthodox philosophers and Party officials, began participating in the congresses in 1956. As initially defined, their mission was to prevent “circulation of the slanderous information concerning the USSR that had taken place at the previous Congresses” [Zapiska 1997, 38]. It worth noting that during the 1950s and 1960s, scientific and scholarly administration on the other side of the Iron Curtain was not free of a similar political valence and preoccupations with the “communist threat” [Gordin *et al.* 2003, 50-53]. This also applied to the external science policies of private American foundations [Pollack 1979: 56].

was visibly represented in the “critique of bourgeois sociology,” which was limited to an introduction to the works by Georges Gurvitch and Lucien Goldmann from the earlier intellectual generation of 1930s-1950s [Ossipov 1977, chapters 7 and 8].

Intrinsic difficulties and gaps in the reception of various explanatory models evinced not so much direct ideological censorship, as much as an implicit accord about the limits of sociology in which official censors and moderately oppositional sociologists converged. This same tacit accord led them and their successors in the 1990s to deny Bourdieu’s sociological legitimacy and to criticize his works as post-modern and unscholarly. As it teetered on the verge of political legitimacy during the late Soviet period, the sociological discipline was propped up and limited by two safety principles: application of a harmonious scheme to social structure and a quantitative approach accompanied by the forced rejection of its own high-level theory.<sup>9</sup> These political-cognitive constraints served as a natural barrier against any model that proceeded from different professional context. Only an abrupt shift of institutional and political routines could deflect the way this intellectual horizon was reproduced. In fact, this occurred in the late 1980s, when for a short period (1987-1990) sociology received official status as a tool for democratic and Western-oriented reforms.<sup>10</sup>

## **Creating the Context**

### **1.**

This political shift did not reverse (and only explicitly confirmed) the existing dominant orientation towards mainstream American sociology. But it also diversified possible options for getting the “correct” sociological experience, as opposed to the inefficient Soviet one. As a result, in the late 1980s, several French-speaking research fellows from Soviet academic centers<sup>11</sup> began visiting Paris with financial support from French government ministries and the Foundation Maison des sciences de l’homme for the purpose of studying the contemporary social sciences in France. In 1990, Natalia Shmatko, a 35-year-old female sociologist (graduated in psychology) from the Moscow Institute of Sociology, received a postdoctoral scholarship in France. She was first assigned Raymond Boudon as her academic advisor; then, fol-

<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed analysis of these mechanisms and their transposition in the post-Soviet period, see Bikbov and Gavrilenko 2002/2003; Bikbov 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Decree of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee [O razvitii 1988]. Among other things, this decree prescribed the creation of university sociology departments, which had not existed until then.

<sup>11</sup> Knowledge of French was (and still is) quite uncommon amongst Russian sociologists.

lowing some informal studies, she transferred to Bourdieu [Chmatko 2005, 419]. This trip launched her career as the first and most important of Bourdieu's Russian translators in the 1990s, work that was sustained by subsequent scholarships and collaboration with the Centre de sociologie européenne, directed by Bourdieu.<sup>12</sup> In 1992, a new sociological review entitled *Voprosy sotsiologii* [Questions of Sociology] was inaugurated with Shmatko's Russian translation of Bourdieu's article "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups" [Bourdieu 1992]. The following year, another translator, Valentin Ivanov, published Bourdieu's "Social Space and Symbolic Power" [Bourdieu 1993a], in the recently founded and closely followed social and political sciences review *THESIS*. Along with "Site Effects" [Bourdieu 1993b], published in a third, newly created political review, *Rossiiskij monitor*, these initiatory translations offered by reformist academic periodicals presented a quite radical, prophetic style of making sociology as compared to the Soviet model, and echoes of their impact are still audible today. Due to an imprinting effect both political and intellectual (and even aesthetic), they provided Russophone readers with a longstanding, basic idea of "what" Bourdieu "is," remaining standard reference points in academic articles and introductory curricula.

A distinctive feature of subsequent publications of Bourdieu's work in Russian was that translators avoided his book-length monographs. They offered their colleagues a facilitated way of coping with a tough author, that of articles, lectures and interviews.<sup>13</sup> The first Bourdieu book in Russian was a collection of articles on political subjects taken mainly from the issues of *Actes de la recherches en sciences sociales* published in the 1980s. The collection was prepared by a group of French-speaking female colleagues brought together by the same path-breaking translator, Natalia Shmatko [Bourdieu 1993c].<sup>14</sup> In 1994, she published a complete Russian translation of *In Other Words* [Bourdieu 1994]. This united effort on the part of translators that in some ways favored "faster" texts should be considered a distinctive feature as compared to the first English (*The Algerians*) or Spanish (*The Inheritors* and *Le*

<sup>12</sup> In fact, the institutional composition of the Centre was more complex, but for the sake of convenience I keep this common designation.

<sup>13</sup> According to one of the translators, Bourdieu himself suggested starting with collections of his shorter texts and interviews, particularly with *In Other Words* or *Questions of Sociology* [Chmatko 2005, 424]. This suggestion fit perfectly well with the Russian intellectual conjuncture, where lighter translations prevailed. The first book-length monograph, *The Logic of Practice*, was published in Russian only in 2001.

<sup>14</sup> The texts included in this collection were "Political Representation," "Delegation and Political Fetishism," "Public Opinion Does Not Exist," and "Men and Machines;" "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups" and "Site Effects" were also republished in the collection. The book was printed during a publishing boom and so it came out in an edition of ten thousand copies. (In the bibliography of the present article, the names of all translators are indicated for each publication.)

*Déracinement*) translations of Bourdieu.<sup>15</sup> In the emerging post-Soviet market for academic translations, however, this sort of quick introduction was a quite common choice: on the one hand, there was an avalanche of newly (re)discovered and (as yet) decontextualized foreign authors; on the other, the spare time that academics might once have devoted to meticulous, thorough writing and reading was rapidly dwindling.

For translators as well as for readers, the general reception strategy that reigned well into the late 1990s consisted in a compensatory, initiatory form of consumption based on sampling. The purpose of the first translations was to give readers a sense of the original productions of foreign authors who had previously been known via “critical” appraisals and surveys of the Soviet period. This new strategy was “original” in both senses of the word: an author’s authentic texts were made available to intellectual consumers, who could thus “catch up” (at last!) with “real” Western scholarship. As a result, a widespread type of publication was translations of relatively brief key texts (review articles, methodological introductions, lectures, etc.) accompanied by propaedeutic forewords. The authors most often translated were those who had already been inserted in the Soviet “critique of bourgeois theory,” where they were frequently tagged with the warning labels “subjectivism” or “revisionism.” The 1990s thus saw translations of Durkheim, Weber, Mannheim, Alfred Schutz, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, Harold Garfinkel, the Frankfurt School authors, Niklas Luhmann, and several others.

New names were added to this list essentially via the personal contacts of young intermediaries with living authors. As was the case with Bourdieu, the texts of Anthony Giddens were imported to Russia directly by his first trainees and postgraduate students from Saint Petersburg and Novosibirsk, who rapidly climbed the academic ladder. In the 1990s, these two sociologists were considered congenial in Russia, and their names were engaged in attempts to narrow the definition of “contemporary sociology,” a term that otherwise designated a wide range of previously tabooed sociologies, beginning with Durkheim and Weber. In 1995, Giddens’s former postgraduate student Alena Ledeneva published excerpts from books by Giddens, Bourdieu, and Habermas. To represent Bourdieu, she chose the chapter “Structures, *habitus*, practices,” from the English edition of *The Logic of Practice* [Bourdieu 1995]. This publication was also noticed by the academic world and has since been referenced in introductory courses. Another young scholar from the same circle published an

<sup>15</sup> The rapid appearance of these monographs in Spanish introduced Bourdieu to the national intellectual context as primarily a sociologist of education, that is, as a scientific author meant for specialists [Pestaña 2005]. The subsequent Spanish reception was basically synchronized with the French one.



article [Volkov 1997] that classified contemporary sociologies vis-à-vis the concept of practice; in this article, Bourdieu is mentioned along with Giddens, Garfinkel, and Erving Goffman, as well as Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Foucault.

As a whole, the first translators and intermediaries of up-to-date social theory in Russian belonged to the generation of thirty- and fortysomethings. They were sociologists, philosophers, and historians who profited from international scholarships and in some cases were able to institutionalize their experience and international contacts in the form of new academic centres and postdoctoral institutions.<sup>16</sup> In 1995, Natalia Shmatko and her husband Iuri Kachanov, also a research fellow at the Moscow Institute of Sociology, founded the Russian-French Centre for Sociology and Philosophy, whose activities focused on the dissemination of texts produced by Bourdieu and his circle, as well as on research projects conducted under the patronage of the Centre de sociologie européenne (CSE) in Paris. The strategy of making the “Russian Bourdieu” was based on the direct import of the most relevant French research context, as embodied by CSE scholars and by Bourdieu’s French allies. In accordance with this logic, the publication of Bourdieu’s texts in the 1990s was accompanied by the translation of a number of articles by Patrick Champagne, Christophe Charle, Remi Lenoir, Michel Pinçon and Monique Pinçon-Charlot, Louis Pinto, Remi Ponton, and Monique de Saint-Martin. Compared with isolated transfer attempts, this project produced a more long-lasting result because it was based on personal collaboration with relevant French colleagues, and not on the simple privilege of using rich Western libraries that was often preferred by Russian scholarship winners. In addition, dissemination of Bourdieu’s works was supplemented by the Russian-French Centre’s own publications, including, in the 1990s, a score of articles and essays that elucidated Bourdieu’s method or applied it to Russian political, economic and sociological matters.<sup>17</sup> The compact group of scholars who jointly participated in the translations and French scholarship programs,<sup>18</sup> contributed equally to this expansion with their own publications, which tested the method in such research domains as social differentiation in the educational system [Tcherednichenko 1992], urban space [Trushchenko 1995], or the architectural profession [Voznesenskaya 1996]. This professional strategy was occasionally adopted by younger newcomers

<sup>16</sup> The most visible example is the department of sociology and political science in the European University at Saint Petersburg (founded in 1994).

<sup>17</sup> Beginning with the first essayist projections of Bourdieu’s conceptual vocabulary to Russian politics [Kachanov 1993] and up to the first consistent research papers based on the notion of capital [Shmatko 1996].

<sup>18</sup> All of them were female French-speaking research fellows at the Moscow Institute of Sociology. They belonged to the same generation and had subordinate positions in centers and projects directed by substantially more established and legitimist scholars.

(recent university graduates) from the outside world who were academically motivated and able to maintain relatively stable personal contact with the group's leaders. As such, in 1996 the author of the present article enrolled at the Russian-French Centre for postgraduate studies and entered the professional scene at the beginning of the current decade with translations [Bourdieu 2001; Bourdieu 2003; Champagne *et al.* 2001],<sup>19</sup> introductory texts [Bikbov 2001; Bikbov 2003a], and research projects based on Bourdieu's approach [e.g. Bikbov and Gavrilenko 2002/2003]; some of this work was partly supported by French scholarships. The overall result of the work produced by the Russian-French Centre thus could not be ignored. Nonetheless, the impact of these activities remained quite limited and did not set off a chain reaction in the reception of Bourdieu in Russia. There were several reasons for this.

## 2.

One of the key reasons has to do with the way in which the political foundations of Russian sociology turned into intellectual preferences. Bourdieu's entry into the early post-Soviet academic context was itself thoroughly bound up with dramatic institutional reforms and the unleashing of social struggles. The fact that the first translations and enthusiastic adaptations of Bourdieu's works were directly related to an "alternative" type of political analysis was not accidental. This choice emphasized an affinity between the prophetic and radical elements of Bourdieu's critique<sup>20</sup> and the nature of the early post-socialist transformations, as embodied in an acute and commonly felt sense of a highly seismic social conjuncture, open-ended play amongst competing political and professional positions, partially suspended academic hierarchies, and the explicit contestation of the recent political and academic authorities. If I may draw on the provisional homology between dissimilar Russian and French sociologies, this was manifested in the fact that Bourdieu's intellectual revolt was made professional practice and politically "revolted" Russian structures were turned into base for intellectual habit.

Elements of Bourdieu's method saw a more coherent application in political analysis, where the notion of *field* (used as a conceptual expression for unrestrained political competition) affected the harmonious model of political process, or the "po-

<sup>19</sup> To be exact, translating Bourdieu and his circle was not the sole area of import activities undertaken by the Centre. It tended to embrace everything relating to "contemporary French" theory, so the list of authors whose texts were also translated and commented included Derrida and Lyotard (by Natalia Shmatko) or Maurice Halbwachs (by the author of the present article).

<sup>20</sup> By which I mean not Bourdieu's political interventions after 1995, but the research papers published in the 1970s and 1980s.

litical system” proper to Soviet sociology and philosophy. In the 1990s, the notion of field was used as a framework for either empirical analysis of, for example, free parliamentary elections [Satarov 1992], or attempts to theorize power and politics [Kachanov 1995; Degtyarev 1996]. One of the first Russian dissertations based on Bourdieu’s approach [Tsygankov 1997] was an attempt to leave this area, but it was nevertheless strongly determined by the political turn. The author, a young political analyst and former student of Russian philosophy, interpreted in terms of *habitus*, *strategies*, and *field* the biography of Solzhenitsyn, a public figure symbolic more of the new political situation than the new situation in literature. These applications were evidence that the common social experience of early post-socialist Russia was potentially fertile soil for the reception of Bourdieu’s works. They came, however, at the end of this especially saturated, approximately seven-year period (1986-92), when a basic renewal of the hierarchies was again under way and the free space of unpredictable opportunities essentially began to narrow. In a certain sense, the elements of Bourdieu’s language that had not become an expression of the common social experience outside political analysis served as a legacy for latecomers – that is, for those who still associated themselves with the previous phase of political and social opening, whereas the next curtailment phase had already started.

Dominant scholars who belonged to the same age cohort as Bourdieu made up an influential faction of Russian sociologists that was undisposed to support and circulate Bourdieu’s model.<sup>21</sup> They had successfully constructed their careers under the late Soviet regime, in spite of the fact that they had belonged to the “soft” liberal opposition. Most of them applauded the new reforms as a chance to cement their academic status and raise it politically. For them, Bourdieu’s approach was alien, either in terms of its basic model of intellectual practice and non-transparent theoretical references,<sup>22</sup> or because of its profoundly critical orientation, which they perceived as useless and destructive. The sole exception to this generational rule was Andrei Zdravomyslov [1994], who found himself at that moment in a quite delicate position – as the last president of the Soviet Sociological Association dissolved shortly earlier.<sup>23</sup> Proceeding from the first Bourdieu article translated into Russian [1992] and

<sup>21</sup> The age factor (and relevant hierarchical position) appears specially important in the reception story. In the 1960s and 1970s, this generation was actively learning to operate new sociological models. Being politically and linguistically oriented by the Cold War conjuncture, they found these models in the English-speaking world.

<sup>22</sup> It thus encountered hostile doubts. Why “social space,” not “social sphere”? How is it that “power is everywhere”? How is it possible to “construct social facts”? [Rutkevich 1995].

<sup>23</sup> At the Soviet Congress of Sociology in 1991, Zdravomyslov was elected a co-president of the Soviet Sociological Association (SSA); in 1992, when the Soviet Union had passed into history, the SSA ceased to function. Contrary to the other two newly elected co-presidents, Zdravomyslov did

several other newly introduced authors, including Foucault (identified as a “prominent sociologist”), he proposed to revise Soviet political theory<sup>24</sup> in terms of active construction of social reality by the authorities. His major professional and political opponent did not take long in responding with a ferocious critique [Rutkevich 1995].

Another important source of resistance to Bourdieu’s adoption on Russian soil was a faction of younger established sociologists and intellectuals. Members of the same generation of thirty- and forty-year-olds as Bourdieu’s Russian intermediaries, they promoted the European and American authors who had already been legitimized by the Soviet “critique of bourgeois sociology.” Attached to subject-oriented and politically more liberal basic theories, and at the same time respectful towards the sociology of large numbers, some of them insisted that “metaphors like *habitus* and *discourse* only make sense in a certain fashionable context[; they] are intended for a quite specific beau monde” [Batygin 1996, 19]. The greater part of this criticism has never been published, circulating instead in conversations and professorial speech. Even so, this oral form was effective in maintaining the skeptical and fearful attitude widespread among the dominant factions of sociologists. Nevertheless, they were unable to win the day because there existed a larger faction of applied research sociologists who were quite interested in having new tools for their work.

The reason why Bourdieu’s sociology did not make the transition from the acutely political to the broader sociological register was that its main promoter, the Russian-French Centre, remained to a considerable extent a small and eccentric family enterprise managed by the founding couple within a big, Soviet-type academic institution. As it mobilized a compact group of subordinates inside the institution and developed activities essentially linked to France, the Centre did not really target either a larger stratum of researchers nor university professors and sociology undergraduates. Quite isolated in the disciplinary field, the Centre’s founders maintained a partly institutional, partly deliberate detachment from higher education, and this prevented them from cultivating eventual supporters.<sup>25</sup> Instead of mobilizing a wider peer milieu, they made publications the main stake – that is, the ideas were supposed to speak for themselves. Indeed, their declared critical position towards current Russian

not obtain a substantial heritage from the Soviet institutions, while Vladimir Iadov had been already nominated (in 1988) and re-elected (in 1991) the director of the Moscow Institute of Sociology, and Zhan Toshchenko who followed his predominantly administrative career, took in 1991 multiple administrative positions in former Soviet institutions. The article by Zdravomyslov published in 1994 was initially presented at a conference held in 1993 by the Russian Sociological Association, which tried to assign itself after the SSA.

<sup>24</sup> Soviet theory treated power (of the State) as a reflection of the people’s interests.

<sup>25</sup> They did not consider a permanent university career in Russia desirable and did not themselves engage in teaching, with the exception of two or three supplementary courses during the 1990s.

sociology, adopted from Bourdieu's model and thus doubling his original works, was quite a strong program point that attracted more mobile and critical colleagues (especially "latecomers") and repulsed more established ones. Some elements of this position had already been put forth in the first didactic introduction to Bourdieu's articles [Shmatko 1993]. Here, the institutionalized division between theoretical and empirical sociology was implicitly contested by indicating the exemplary unity of both dimensions in Bourdieu's works and his rejection of scholastic disciplinary squabbles. The natural character and inevitability of the political reforms that often reverberated in post-Soviet sociological publications were patently opposed to an advantageous application of the concept of field as the site of unequal, open-ended political struggle. Simultaneously, certain precautions were taken against the inevitable accusations of "subjectivism." The text explicitly underscored the precedence and, even, the priority of objective structures over individual practices and Bourdieu's renunciation of the bare subject in favour of the active agent and the structured *habitus*. Some concomitants of the reception formula proposed by the Centre, however, severed it from the sociological mainstream without providing it within some other intellectual focus.

While the majority of Russian sociologists were debating political changes and the dimensions of social stratification and discovering the plurality of sociological theories, the Centre's founders were publishing key texts that dealt with the non-existence of social groups and the conditions of possibility of social reality [Shmatko and Kachanov 1996; Kachanov 1999] or that proposed improving some weak points in Bourdieu's approach by wedding them with Derrida's concepts [Kachanov 1997]. The Centre's self-empowerment strategy consisted in an increasingly desperate search for philosophical legitimacy, which contributed to its fatal failure in promoting the method as a model for research and scholarly inquiry. By placing themselves in the gap between critical sociology and radical philosophy, deliberately using the nomination "post-modernism," and mixing texts by Bourdieu with texts by Heidegger, Derrida, Baudrillard, and Badiou (but, notably, not Foucault) within the same compilations and commentaries,<sup>26</sup> this small family enterprise fostered the suspicions of their colleagues about the highly and uselessly philosophical nature of Bourdieu's works. Along with its detachment from higher education, this strategic choice against strict research work kept the Centre on the margins both of the core disciplinary and posh interdisciplinary circuits, and thus fostered the image of Bourdieu as an author reserved for highbrow freaks. Reinforced by the translations of only minor texts and interviews, this pattern was strongly imprinted in the minds of Russian sociologists. In

<sup>26</sup> Especially the *Sotsio-Logos* series of compilations published by the Centre – *Sotsio-Logos post-modernizma* [1997] and *Poetika i politika* [1998].

the beginning of the present decade, one influential project administrator and author of positivist studies on Russian social structure asserted in an oral discussion, “How can Bourdieu contribute to an understanding of social structure? We all know that he has not conducted a single empirical study!”.

The most visible and, in some ways, natural product of this hybridized promotion was the generation of young and ambitious political essayists (graduates of Moscow State University philosophy department) who had received Bourdieu’s texts in such a philosophically favorable and “chic” accompaniment. Having entered into the publications market at the very end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new decade, they at first aspired towards a quick incorporation into the university hierarchies. When this did not happen or a university career revealed itself to be too long and dull, they drifted towards political and cultural journalism, rapidly acquiring a clear right-wing accent similar to the German 1920s model of the conservative revolution. Their contribution to Bourdieu reception was an attempt (ultimately unsuccessful) to use his name and concepts (as part of a heterogeneous, intellectually prestigious set of authors that also included Derrida, Baudrillard, and others) in a politically conservative power play masked as radical renovation. Thus, an anthology entitled “The Dusk of Globalization: Bedside Reading for the Anti-Globalist” [Ashkerov 2004] offered readers a sampling of texts by explicitly ultraconservative Russian essayists (Konstantin Krylov, Mikhail Remizov, Vladimir Nikitaev) garnished with three texts by Ulrich Beck, two by Marshall McLuhan, and one by Göran Therborn. The book was dedicated to the memory of Bourdieu, and whereas explicit references to his works were quite limited, editor found himself able to assert (in one of his own several contributions to the volume) that Bourdieu’s *On Television* is “up to date mainly thanks to its purely conservative attitude to social life” [Ashkerov 2004, 219]. The latest paradoxical result of this politically and intellectually marginal trend is that Bourdieu’s vocabulary and even the research papers of his French disciples (e.g., Pinto) have been used to undermine the intellectual authority of left-wing thinkers such as Alain Badiou [Ulianov 2008].

### 3.

A pole of positive disciplinary reception of Bourdieu in Russian sociology of the 1990s was comprised of thirty- and forty-year-old scholars who did not speak French and thus encountered Bourdieu’s method in earlier Russian translations and, later on, within joint research projects where the working language was English or German. They retrieved conceptual tools from Bourdieu’s works and sought to apply

them on their own. The author of the above-mentioned dissertation on Solzhenitsyn's trajectory in the literary and political fields [Tsygankov 1997] was one such young scholar; he became interested in Bourdieu's method while doing postgraduate work at Bielefeld University. In fact, attempts of this kind were not numerous and they did not lead to the formation of a school: firstly, because they were tentative explorations realized by individual users; secondly, because of their partial and eclectic manner, in which Bourdieu's notions were used as conceptual substitutes, if not synonyms, for Marxist (Parsonsian) or commonplace intuitions. One of the most straightforward attempts in this vein was made by Vladimir Ilyin [1996], who tried to integrate elements of Bourdieu's vocabulary into considerably more legitimate Soviet and American models of social structure. Conceptual integration passed here through a chain of identifications that ended in a return to more acknowledged notion – for example, *field* = *social space* = *a set of status positions* based on *achievement* or *ascription* [Ilyin 1996, chapter 1]<sup>27</sup> – so that Bourdieu was included in the same ecumenical frame as Parsons. The notion of capital was framed in a similarly labile equation. Here, the appropriate use by Bourdieu of the distinct notion of *symbolic capital* was even subjected to doubt, for “any capital is economic [capital] (= market resource) (...) The symbol is the kernel of culture. That is why symbolic capital is a variation of cultural capital where its essence reveals itself in supreme form” [Ilyin 1996, chapter 5]. The density and extreme malleability of the conceptual frames proposed in this way were features common to early post-Soviet reception attempts: multiple, newly accepted “Western” notions were rather intuitively and metaphorically plopped down on pre-structured social data. The production of a new interpretive context proceeded from an extremely limited initial horizon and to a large extent constituted a form of autodidacticism.

Another, subtler attempt to adapt Bourdieu at the intersection of ethnography, sociology, and literature was made by Natalia Kozlova and Irina Sandomirskaia [1996]. In a project that helped to constitute post-Soviet history of everyday life/cultural studies, they proposed a restoration of the social fabric of the Soviet era via “naïve writing,” that is, diaries and correspondence left to posterity by undereducated authors.<sup>28</sup> Here, Bourdieu was one in a long list of conceptual donors that in-

<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere in this chapter, the possible identification of any social unit with any other such united is proposed via the notion of field: “The social field may be States, factories, ethnic groups, cities, etc. They have attributes of systems, and yet they are not systems.” In a similar way, the author proposed later a model of social structure constituted by a set of “fields:” *field of the proletariat*, *field of the bourgeoisie*, *field of the traditional middle class* and *field of the new middle class* [Ilyin 2003].

<sup>28</sup> Kozlova has published an article in English [1998] based on this book. It is worth noting that this

cluded Roland Barthes, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel de Certeau, Alfred Schutz, Jean-François Lyotard, Clifford Geertz, Ferdinand Braudel, Michel Maffesoli, and some others. The use of their works was not purely theoretical, dipped as it was into the rich matter of “personal situations” and spontaneous expression. Unlike the adaptations in the area of political analysis or studies of social structure, here Bourdieu was promoted from the inventor of the concept of *field* to an attentive ethnographic and theoretical observer who made scattered remarks on how discourse monopolists treat themselves and others differently, how moral values are needs that became virtues, how strategies are tools for mastering an alien space, and so forth. The common logic of the conceptual equation was present here as well, though all the notions thus manifested belonged to the newly adopted (post-Soviet) vocabulary, which relegated analysis to the pole of the definitive theoretical avant-garde.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4.

Between these two poles of adoption of Bourdieu’s works – the absolutism of translators and the ecumenicism of receptors – we find, in the mid-1990s, sparse “theoretical” summaries and introductions that reiterate the notions of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* as imported from Russian and English translations or, less often, directly from the French publications [Radaev and Shkaratan 1995; Piankova 1996]. The (mis)attributions in these texts reveal the structures at work in the context of reception itself. Here Bourdieu, Foucault, and Alain Touraine could be put into one basket of “new post-structuralist authors who do not apparently belong to any classical current” [Radaev and Shkaratan 1995, 124]. Identified as “one of Foucault’s disciples,” Bourdieu could be seen to propose “*habitus* (...) as the most important intermediate element in the formation of all collective identifications.” Neither verifiable nor refutable, these telegraphic statements meant to orient students<sup>30</sup> left no apparent traces in the subsequent research or theory. They contributed, however, to a vague

project, which targeted a compact and rare object, did not fit exactly the frame of sociological revision since Kozlova was institutionalized as a philosopher and was older (turning fifty in the mid-1990s) than the international scholarships generation. Sandomirskaja, part of this generation from the very early 1990s, stayed in the linguistics sector of cultural studies, working in Sweden.

<sup>29</sup> An example: “Tactics (following Michel de Certeau) or strategies (following Pierre Bourdieu) are something that allow one to master an alien space – partially, with no claims to global coverage, without the possibility to maintaining distance. Here there is no base that allows one to capitalize advantages, to mount an expansion, to maintain autonomy” [Kozlova and Sandomirskaja 1996: 21].

<sup>30</sup> This manual [Radaev and Shkaratan 1995] has frequently been used as a base for introductory courses in social structure studies.



vision of Bourdieu's approach as a discrete instance of "post-structuralism" that was more intellectually prestigious than sociologically viable.

This vision gained renewed credence at the very end of the 1990s, when growing nationalism in the Russian social sciences and criticism of "Western science" raised the possibility that "alien" theories were inapplicable to Russia's unique reality. These attempts at devalorization did not really succeed in changing academic habits of referencing foreign authors as principal authorities, although they reinforced the overall intellectual hierarchy: Bourdieu was one of the first targets of criticism, unlike Giddens or Luhmann, who were more widely tolerated. A faction of middle-aged dominant sociologists who had themselves previously contributed to the dissemination of the new concepts and models turned to criticism after they had gradually discovered substantial difficulties with the quick application of imported theories in the post-Soviet academic context, rather than to social reality as such. At the same time, Bourdieu's key concepts did not cease to circulate. They were inserted into publications in order to express particular research intuitions, and in introductory courses to demarcate new approaches. There is no need to stipulate that this use was more natural to young scholars from reformist research and university centers.

## **The Context Creates Careers**

### **1.**

The first generation of receptors and intermediaries shared a particular albeit not completely confluent set of social properties. As specified above, a more acute, positive sensitivity to Bourdieu's explanatory model was experienced by those scholars who dealt with the new political order as it was being constituted, often in the forms both of analysis and direct engagement. In 1990, Georgy Satarov established the applied political research foundation INDEM ("Informatics for Democracy") and later (1995-97) served as an advisor to President Yeltsin. In 1990, Iuri Kachanov left the Moscow Institute of Sociology for five years to join Satarov's foundation and try his hand at local politics. Andrei Degtiarev kept his chair at Moscow State University while serving as a deputy in the Moscow City Duma (1990-93). Daniil Tsygankov had been working as a political and campaign consultant since 1990. There were other scholars in major university cities such as Moscow, Petersburg, and Tomsk who shared a general interest in Bourdieu's sociology after having had initiatory political experiences in the early 1990s.

A second property complementary to this one was also mentioned above – direct, intense contact with foreign colleagues. This was not necessarily contact with

Bourdieu's circle, as in the case of Natalia Shmatko. More often, it involved exchanges and collaborations in those international contexts where Bourdieu's methodology had been already acknowledged as indispensable. Such was the case of several sociologists that have already been mentioned: Alena Ledeneva and Vadim Volkov (the milieu of Anthony Giddens); their elder colleague Daniil Alexandrov (who had been immersed in an international milieu since his boyhood in a high-ranking academic family); Vladimir Ilyin and Daniil Tsygankov (collaborative projects with German or English as working languages); and political scientist Andrei Degtiarev (who visited several Anglophone universities during the 1990s). In a more diffuse way, Bourdieu's vocabulary entered the texts of those scholars who (re)started their post-Soviet careers within Russian-German, Russian-Finnish and other international projects where Bourdieu's model, while not occupying a central place, served as an auxiliary tool or as one element of a common language.

The third, less evident property that determined an abiding interest in Bourdieu's method was the formation (including at the secondary school level) of these promoters in the exact sciences or, at very least, an acquaintance with their methods, in particular, applied statistics. This was the case of Kachanov, who first studied mathematics before graduating with a chemistry degree; Satarov, who had degree in mathematics and programming; Shmatko, who graduated from a psychology department, where she was taught basic statistics along with "frog dissection;" and former biologist Alexandrov who has maintained the most protracted (albeit not uncritical) interest in Bourdieu's sociology among the professors of the European University at Saint Petersburg. Combined with a sensitivity to a wider social problematics, in particular, to political history and the history and philosophy of science, this background in the exact sciences facilitated reception of an important aspect of Bourdieu's work – stochastic schemes – that could not be interpreted by "pure humanities" scholars in the same welcoming manner.

These unevenly distributed professional skills and properties constituted the social ground for Bourdieu's positive reception in Russian in the 1990s, naturally selecting eventual adepts and interested students. The founding couple of the Russian-French Centre, Shmatko and Kachanov, were in some ways the ideal-type recipients since together they covered most of the above-listed properties. Another place favorable to Bourdieu's "normalization" was formed at Petersburg's European University (Alexandrov, Ledeneva, Volkov, Oleg Kharkhordin), which was constantly plugged into the international, especially English-speaking context through visiting lecturers and academic exchange.

2.

The core opposition to Bourdieu's sociology (already outlined above) was constituted mainly by leading scholars from the central academic institutions, universities, and research centers. Affiliation and career type should thus be considered as strong dividing factors, as long as a faction of the dominant sociologists partly shared the same professional properties as their pro-Bourdieu colleagues, like political experience or hard sciences background. Although there was this set of subjective qualities in common, the distance between Bourdieu's adherents and opponents was structural: it was mostly related to institutional positions and correlated strategies. The opposition between the major hierarchically oriented academic institutions (in decline albeit still powerful, and rooted in the local context<sup>31</sup>) and the newly founded, peer- and internationally oriented compact research centers showed that an explicit appropriation of Bourdieu's model was characteristic for career types that were sufficiently marginal in the post-Soviet context. This was a quite peculiar marginality: it was anything but total deprivation, and it consisted first and foremost in the mismatch of redundant intellectual resources to the dominant disciplinary context propped up by the lack of administrative capital. In other words, if Bourdieu appeared in the Russian social sciences as an author for underdogs or academic "latecomers," they maintained this status in a sector with elevated cultural stakes. The representatives of the same culturally elitist sector who decisively rejected Bourdieu's sociological value in publications and professorial discourses belonged to the stratum of "semi-mandarins" ready to assume the places of the retiring " mandarins " in the disciplinary hierarchy.

If, at the end of the 1990s, some " mandarins " condescendingly considered Bourdieu a " postmodernist,"<sup>32</sup> the following age and hierarchical cohort read his works in a more distinctive manner, directly attributing to them a sort of cognitive danger. An exemplary case of an " ideal inheritor " would be Alexander Filippov, son of a leading Soviet sociologist (mentioned at the beginning of this article), a promoter of Luhmann (along with Carl Schmitt and Hans Freyer), and member of numerous academics institutions, review boards, and scholarly foundations. In his review of the

<sup>31</sup> As regards formal academic recognition, such as the awarding of degrees or accreditation of private education centers.

<sup>32</sup> Aside from everything else, this labelling delivered them from a detailed acquaintance with Bourdieu's works. A remark made by one of the most referenced sociologists since the 1960s, Vladimir Iadov, is exemplary in this respect. In 1999, the author of the present article discussed at the Moscow Institute of Sociology a compilation that included texts by Bourdieu. While the title was "Space and time in contemporary sociological theory," Iadov insisted that this "sociological theory" should be identified as "postmodernist."

Russian translation of *The Logic of Practice*, he lamented that Bourdieu's vocabulary "[had] become for far too many people not only the language of description but that of observation" [Filippov 2002, 83]. One aspect of the cultural legacy he imparted to his disciples, who began publishing and teaching in the present decade, included this basic distrust of Bourdieu's sociology accompanied by a predilection for "pure theory." So while the homology principle did not clearly operate in the positive reception of Bourdieu's model, we may note that the motivation and social mechanism of the negative reception resembled its French counterparts [Mauger 2004, 376 ff.].

Since Bourdieu's works had not become part of the disciplinary core by the present decade and the most well-established disciplinary factions were opposed to them, it was therefore useless (if not harmful) for a sociologist's career if he or she insisted on a clear devotion to Bourdieu's sociology. Some primary users pursuing international academic recognition were inclined, after 2000, to reject Bourdieu as an author whose work was "out-of-date," especially those academics without hard science backgrounds who were attracted by the more interpretative and thus portable types of social analysis proposed by such internationalized French thinkers as Foucault, Bruno Latour, Luc Boltanski, and Laurent Thévenot, or influential Anglophone authors like Goffman, Wittgenstein, and Quentin Skinner. This was the case, in particular, for the majority of professors in the sociology and political science department at the European University at Saint Petersburg.<sup>33</sup> Others did not leave the appropriated area, however, continuing to graft Bourdieu to "radical chic" philosophy, as was the case at the French-Russian Centre. Thus, in the afterword to the first Bourdieu book-length monograph translated into Russian, the presentation of *The Logic of Practice* as an "accomplished sociology classic of the twentieth century" was made by problematizing *habitus* as pre-reflexive *cogito* or figuring consciousness as a social structure that was manifested through its absence per se [Shmatko 2001a].<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> E.g., Kharhordin [2007]. A revealing exception still existed, that of Daniil Alexandrov. Unlike the majority of his colleagues in the department, he did not belong to the thirty-year-old international scholarships generation, having academically socialized in the Soviet context, with training in biology and the history of science. He has used and discussed Bourdieu's model up to the latest years [Alexandrov 2006]. In view of this set of professional properties and in spite of a relatively stable administrative position, frequent international scholarships, and well-established contacts with American colleagues, Alexandrov was slightly misplaced within his specifically marginal institution. This nuanced misplacement reinforces the relevance of Bourdieuan critical analysis for relatively marginal academic positions not only on the institutional, but also on the group level. Although we may speak of "optimal marginality" in the same terms that Marco Santoro [2008] evokes in the introduction to the present *Symposium*, it would be premature to make a direct homology between these positions in the Russian academic context and that extremely prestigious and powerful "eccentric" position (EHESS, Collège de France) accompanied with explicitly anti-institutional attitude that Bourdieu attributed to himself [Bourdieu 1989].

<sup>34</sup> This did not represent the Centre's unique production type insofar as it was accompanied by

3.

A new – in some sense, purist – demand for critical sociology came from the next generation, that of the newcomers who had come to know Bourdieu's works during their university studies and entered the academic profession at the very end of the 1990s and the early years of this decade. They were essentially former students of the recently founded sociology departments who were not satisfied with the narrow university definition of sociology, which remained tangibly close to the officially accepted Soviet definition. Small in number among a student population that was either uninterested in scholarship or utilitarian in orientation, they belonged to a faction that possessed “excessive” cultural competences: they were interested in philosophy or adjacent disciplines, such as anthropology, history or even art theory, whose connection to sociology was (and is) not institutionalized in the Russian academic context. An even smaller part of this faction came from a sub-dominant social environment.<sup>35</sup> Critical of cultural authority, they were inclined to criticism of structures rather than to criticism of the conceptions of individual authors. Bourdieu's challenging analysis of academic hierarchies and, more broadly, of structural conditions of social inequalities resounded particularly well with this inclination. The basic choice of these newcomers in favor of Bourdieu was essentially influenced by the reformist academic centers, which initiated them into the current French or American intellectual context.<sup>36</sup>

The newcomers' quest for intellectual resources was reinforced by their social properties, which they wholly or partly shared with those of the first generation.<sup>37</sup> At the beginning of their careers, the young Bourdieu adherents habitually reproduced

papers proposing a clearer Bourdieu-oriented version of the critical analysis of economics [Shmatko 2004]. Nevertheless along with this kind of text and translations of Bourdieu's works, the Centre continued its hybridization experiments – for example, public policy as defined by Habermas's notion *Öffentlichkeit* was hurriedly bred with Bourdieu's symbolic violence [Shmatko 2001b]; a “randomized strategy” for Vladimir Putin was based on an articulation of Bourdieu's and Heidegger's concepts with mathematics [Kachanov 2004]; and extremely formalized or highly metaphysical analyses of sociological texts were introduced [Kachanov and Markova 2004; Kachanov 2007].

<sup>35</sup> That is, from the families of middle-range intellectuals, applied scientists, and white-collar workers, who could give their children a taste of cultural engagement without transferring to them an institutionalized cultural heritage.

<sup>36</sup> This was also the case of the author of the present article, who enrolled in the French-Russian Centre (where he collaborated from 1996 to 2002) via an utterly narrow external recruitment path – that is, via one of two or three auxiliary courses taught by its founders at Russian universities.

<sup>37</sup> As for the author of the present article, he did advanced studies in chemistry, then literature in high school. At university, he specialized in political science in a sociology department and attended philosophy department courses. He shared the generally internationalist orientation of his parents. An important factor was that he studied French (not German) at university as his second foreign language.

the generic scheme, placing Bourdieu's works in a wider theoretical horizon represented by Foucault, Barthes, Lévi-Strauss or Habermas, less often by Husserl or the philosophers of language.<sup>38</sup> Later, being directly involved in international academic exchanges, they gradually adjusted their interests and publications to existing disciplinary models. Those few who adhered to more independent strategies that avoided compromise with Soviet-type intellectual models marked the earlier stages of their sociological careers with analyses of the professional environment itself [Bikbov and Gavrilenko 2002/2003; Pogorelov and Sokolov 2004]. The choice of academic authorities they subjected to analysis and criticism and the degree of this criticism could not avoid being decisive for the following stages of these scholars' careers. After he published an analysis of the academic mechanisms that had insured the transition from Soviet to post-Soviet sociological theory [Bikbov and Gavrilenko 2002/2003], the author of the present article was fired from the Moscow Institute of Sociology, and this propelled him towards an interdisciplinary environment.

This underscores the importance of interdisciplinarity as a refuge where Bourdieu-oriented critical studies could be continued in a relatively uninhibited manner unlike in the institutionalized sociological context. Throughout the present decade, consistent discussions of Bourdieu's works could be more easily found in dynamic intellectual reviews such *Logos*, *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* [New Literary Review] or *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* [Reserve Stock], rather than in such established disciplinary journals as *Sotsiologicheskie issledovania* [Sociological Studies] or *Sotsiologicheskii zhurnal* [Sociological Journal]. As for Bourdieu's texts themselves, since they were published essentially by independent (not academic) publishers during the 1990s, they remained in the same sector of the Russian publishing market during the following decade.<sup>39</sup> Although it provided express advantages, this tendency towards interdisciplinary and private publishing simultaneously imposed a quite visible limit to the use of the scientific (and statistical) dimension of Bourdieu's model, which was deemed too "difficult" or "boring" for intellectually diversified public. This scientific dimension of Bourdieu's work remains, finally, the least appropriated and least discussed in the Russian context, as compared, for instance, with the American context,

<sup>38</sup> We may note that, as compared to the previous generation, which put Bourdieu together with Parsons, Heidegger or Derrida, this basic framework represented a more research-oriented theory, that is, social structures analysis prevailed over concepts analysis. It had a more philosophical valence in Moscow (an indirect consequence of political and intellectual centralization), but was more sociologically and historically oriented in Petersburg and smaller university cities.

<sup>39</sup> The decline of Russian academic publishing housings in the 1990s is meaningful. Their situation is utterly uncomparable with that of the most important Anglophone and certain French academic publishers.

where the first works applying Bourdieu's analysis to a different data set appeared in the 1970s [e.g., DiMaggio *et al.* 1978].

So, in the new decade, a new pole of academic reception appeared in the interdisciplinary sector: this renewalist philology-cum-cultural studies was grouped around the intellectual review *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* [New Literary Review] aka *NLO*. The way Bourdieu entered this context was similar to one of the reception schemes previously manifested in sociology. Young graduate students at Anglophone Slavic studies departments familiarized themselves with Bourdieu's works and strove to adapt them to their revisionist analyses of Soviet-period literature and culture. In turn, by agreeing to publish Bourdieu's texts and interpretations, *NLO* fulfilled its primary goal to introduce new approaches and thus distinguish itself from old-school (scholastic and arbitrary) Soviet philology. In 2000, Mikhail Gronas, a post-graduate student at the University of Southern California, published Bourdieu's essay "The Field of Literature" [Bourdieu 2000] in *NLO*; the translation was accompanied by Gronas's introduction, which approximated Bourdieu's approach to that of the Russian formalists [Gronas 2000]. A book by Mikhail Berg [2000] printed by *NLO*'s publishing imprint was a result of his postgraduate study in the Slavic department at Helsinki University. He strove to apply Bourdieu's critical analysis, combining it with an eclectic sociological vocabulary and trying not to lose the benefits of literary criticism. As a result of this combination, the most consistent textual dimension remained his critical literary analysis, while Bourdieu was figured as a theorist of literary success.<sup>40</sup> The next notable *NLO* publication dealing with Bourdieu was organized by one of its young editors, Alexander Dmitriev, who had pursued an atypical intellectual trajectory.<sup>41</sup> Dmitriev published "The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic" [Bourdieu 2003b] and invited authors of different disciplinary affiliations to discuss the validity of Bourdieu's analysis of literature and culture. In this discussion, the influential reformist philologist Sergei Zenkin [2003], while favorably treating Bourdieu's *The Rules of Art*,<sup>42</sup> still used precautionary quotation marks when speaking of *fields* and *agents*, also pointing at the economic reductionism of Bourdieu's analysis and its proximity to vulgar Marxism. In turn, a sociological contribution to

<sup>40</sup> The author himself graduated with a degree in informatics after having finished a physics-and-maths secondary school. He was an underground writer in the late Soviet period, an editor and journalist in the post-Soviet period, and was in his late forties when he did his doctoral studies in Helsinki.

<sup>41</sup> His first degree was in history, and he had also taken a degree from the department of sociology and political science in the European University at Saint Petersburg. He was mostly engaged in the history of the humanities, having co-authored an article that projected Bourdieu's and Latour's approaches on the autonomist strategy of the Russian formalists [Dmitriev and Levchenko 2001].

<sup>42</sup> Pioneer translator of works by Barthes, Blanchot and Bataille, he also participated in the translation of *The Logic of Practice* [Bourdieu 2001].

the discussion presented an attempt to exonerate Bourdieu's analysis of culture from this anticipated reductionist perception [Bikbov 2003b].

In spite of this relatively restrained or fuzzy attitude towards Bourdieu's model, the mobilization around the new philology/cultural studies pole made it available as an option for the literary analysis, whereas in the sociological reception the cultural dimension of Bourdieu's works was almost completely absent. Gronas's pioneering publication resonated in the relevant interdisciplinary community; its effect was much more tangible than that provoked by the earlier translation of "The Market of Symbolic Goods" [Bourdieu 1993/1994] in a sociological review. Sociologists omitted another "highly cultural" text, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* [Bourdieu 2003a], classified as a philosophy book in spite of the analysis it proposed and a sociological introduction by the book's editor, which examined Bourdieu's biography and intellectual strategy, something quite remote from the history of philosophy [Bikbov 2003a].<sup>43</sup> Thus, by the present decade, Bourdieu's analyses of cultural production had failed to impact the awareness of sociologists; instead, they were taken up by reformist philologists, philosophers and, to some degree, by right-wing political essayists. The emergence of the new reception pole brought into sharp relief intellectual sensitivity/indifference patterns and revealed anew the general lack of cultural ambitions amongst Russian sociologists, which derived from the discipline's detachment from struggles for cultural legitimacy and its immersion in political and administrative struggles.

#### 4.

This situation was merely reinforced by growing utilitarian and commercial accent in sociology education, which, since 2000, no longer has the training of future academic researchers among its missions.<sup>44</sup> Literally adhering to the meager educational standards required for state accreditation and having created subdivisions for the "study" of publicity, management, tourism, and public relations in the quest for high enrollments and maximum economic profits, the vast majority of the sociolo-

<sup>43</sup> Studied or (at least) referenced by philosophers, this book is absent from sociological bibliographies and has made no visible impact on sociologists, just like "The Market of Symbolic Goods" ten years earlier. Even in bookshops indifferent to academic struggles and interdisciplinary tensions, the book has been shelved along Heidegger's texts in the philosophy section, not in the sociology section.

<sup>44</sup> The "Higher State Standard in Sociological Education" (2000), which serves as a normative base for all university sociology departments, tacitly states that among the professional careers for which this education is a form of preparation are those of professor, expert adviser, public relations specialist, and federal or local bureaucrat, but *not* academic researcher (§ 1.3).



gy departments came to the natural conclusion that Bourdieu's model is irrelevant to "educational needs." Having no direct connection to the models taught in these departments, frequently severed from their curricula, texts by Bourdieu and his adherents have thus not been thoroughly habitualized by new generations of sociology students and their professors. As this decade comes to an end, it is still not rare for students at certain major universities to learn from their professors that Bourdieu is indigestible ("too intellectual"), "postmodern," and even "mentally ill" or "homosexual like all postmodernists."

On the part of students, this failure of reception is reinforced because genuine academic interests figure relatively rarely among their principal motivations. Having dropped to the bottom of both cultural and economic hierarchies, sociology as a university specialization does not attract a high proportion of culturally motivated students. In this decade, as in the 1990s, the most intellectually ambitious students arrive in such departments accidentally or because their parents impose this choice on them. It is rare for such students to engage in an active cultural search in the wider university and world, and they thus seal themselves in intellectually isolated departments. Access to Bourdieu's sociology is left to chance encounters with reformist (mostly postgraduate) academic centers, optional university courses taught by the youngest, internationally oriented professors, rare summer schools or experimental open workshops like the one run from 1999 to 2007 by the author of the present article. Recognized generally as an author avoided if not cursed by the institutional authorities, Bourdieu has been consigned to the category of forbidden (thus genuine) intellectual delicacies.

Skipping out of the realm of frequent professional use, Bourdieu's approach becomes the subject of papers written by those more exigent and institutionally marginalized undergraduates and postgraduate who dispose of two key resources absent to the majority of professional sociologists – a critical spirit towards institutional authorities and spare time for intellectual experimenting, paid for by parents. Bourdieu's sociology risks being stuck at this preparatory level, for the most of these students do not become established sociologists at research institutions and university or have to leave this "excessively intellectual" model at the doorstep as they take up jobs in applied research, marketing or even university teaching.

Since the beginning of this decade, those who remain in the academia and apt to keep advanced intellectual ambitions, gradually shift, in an unfriendly institutional context, to subject-oriented or cognitively less complex models that bear the marks of a more conventional academic style – interactionism, rational choice, discourse

analysis or neo-institutionalism.<sup>45</sup> New theoretical targets may vary, but the same professional mechanism naturally enough compels them to “overcome” (i.e., abandon) Bourdieu’s model in the pursuit of academic recognition and more comfortable career circumstances so long as Bourdieu-friendly institutional conditions are missing.

## **Conclusion**

Having touched since 1990 three generations of Russian sociologists, the reception wave left Bourdieu’s sociology an essentially extradisciplinary phenomenon. This concerns to a lesser extent the mandatory bibliographical references than a genuinely engaged mastering of the sociological concepts and devices. As we have seen, the social properties and cultural predispositions favorable to a practical reception of Bourdieu have been present in the Russia academic and wider intellectual context. Though Bourdieu’s method has been introduced over the past fifteen years, it has not emerged as visibly appropriated research model. What forms would be conducive to such an appropriation? A series of congruent research projects; experiments validating Bourdieu’s stochastic model and its applications; focused discussions in sociology and left-wing intellectual journals; a fashion for Bourdieusque cultural criticism? We may observe all these things in the Anglophone intellectual context, particularly in the UK [Robbins 2008]. even though a side effect of the massive, decontextualized introduction of Bourdieu into the academic market consists in the partial neutralization of his critical program. Contrary to these effects of redundant professionalization, similar trends in the Russian intellectual context are realized in their initial forms.

But is this intellectual model really transferable under a set of institutional and career conditions that define its value in a completely different way? If we take into consideration the fact that administrative cohesion in Russian sociology dominates over scientific recognition, and that the resulting professional interactions are essentially guided by directorial hierarchy, this difference appears to be more clear.<sup>46</sup> We should probably consider the following hypothesis: a critical and self-reflexive approach like the one developed by Bourdieu enjoys a larger positive reception in those

<sup>45</sup> This evolutionary pattern is not the only one: there were several cases (always rare, taking into account the extremely limited population) when young scholars have realized their first career steps towards Bourdieuan sociology. This evolution is present in the generation that entered the discipline during the late 1990s or the early years of this decade, and it is visibly more active in the educational sector than the first Bourdieu promoters. In subsequent generations, then, the evolutionary cycle from critical theory to more conventional intellectualism might be even shorter than the five to eight years previously observed.

<sup>46</sup> For a profound comparison see an article which examines professional structures, notably academic governance, in Soviet/Russian and in French sociology [Bikbov 2009].

scholarly and intellectual contexts that develop on the basis of autonomous – i.e., predominantly peer/collegially administered – institutions, which is generally true in the Francophone and Anglophone contexts. The claim for intellectual autonomy has at least one decisive point in common with both a peer-evaluated professional career and the model of sociological practice proposed by Bourdieu. The way an academic career is organized in different national contexts is decisive first for the assimilation and then for the eventual scholarly (not administrative) supersession of an explanatory model. The weaker the peer principle is embodied in academic institutions and the less autonomous the local community, the less tolerant are dominant institutions and their headliners to critical sociology. In some sense, Bourdieu's sociology acts as a litmus test of institutionally acknowledged autonomy.

During recent years, Russian academic institutions have resisted very well the “French infection,” thus avoiding the uncontrollable growth of intellectualism and anti-hierarchical attitude. As a result, the academic universe continues to manifest an obvious and approved disconnect from critically oriented science. For most scholars, Bourdieu's sociology remains dangerous, thus serving as freelance intellectual ghetto whose exit gates are always open or a signpost for up-to-date discourses and institutions where the latter reserve a place for Bourdieu's works within theoretical courses on the history of sociology. I should stipulate the reason has less to do with the relevant properties of individuals and the capacities that are evidently present. The strange defeat that Bourdieu's sociology has suffered in Russia is due essentially to the dominant institutional framework, which lacks a peer-based experience of scholarly life.

If “it is history which is the true unconscious” (Durkheim's statement often cited by Bourdieu), then a history that is missed produces rationality patterns that consciously escape critical self-analysis. Over the past three decades, Bourdieu's model has served as an efficient tool for testing national academic structures. Are local academic institutions sensitive to self-criticism assisted by Bourdieu's sociology? How is the cultural dimension of Bourdieu's analysis operated? What conceptual models are suggested as a counterforce to Bourdieu's? How do receptors manage the inevitable hybridization problem that arises whenever an attempt is made to transfer the model into an alien context? The reasons and the ways Bourdieu's model is integrated or rejected expose in perfect fashion both dimensions of local intellectual production – the cultural (theoretical) and the political (administrative).

The reforms of European academic organization launched in recent years risk pushing social science structures closer to their Russian counterparts. Even in France, the political and administrative measures officially adopted in 2007 under the title

“LRU”<sup>47</sup> and simultaneous dismantlement of the collegially administered National Research Center (CNRS), have tended to weaken the academic power of peers and transfer it to managerial bodies. In the universities, this transfer manifests itself in the shifting of employment decisions from Academic Councils to Administrative Councils; in the research sector, the evaluation of scholarly production, previously managed by peers in every discipline, tends to be given over to an external institution (AERES), whose evaluations will rely upon a preset hierarchy of academic periodicals. Similar solutions are being encouraged by the relevant ministries in Germany, Italy, and Spain under the rubric of the Bologna process.<sup>48</sup> These changes – a joint effort by the European governments – have met considerable resistance from the academic body and could hardly divorce it completely from peer-based procedures, although they infect academic institutions with an implicit preference for pragmatic approaches over critical ones. The double bind of the social sciences is produced, on the one hand, by governmental pressure in favor of commercially oriented knowledge; on the other, by a student majority that seeks an education valuable on the job market. The so-called centers of excellence – i.e., the recently created institutions or institutional alliances, which dispose the highest concentration of cultural and economic resources – are the first to accept this challenge and to respond to this double bind. They are rapidly developing new forms of administration and academic careers that result from a compromise between intellectual prestige and politically generated efficiency. Thus a partial dismantling of the institutional base for critical sociology is already under way.

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<sup>47</sup> “The Law on the Liberties and Responsibilities of the Universities” (Loi relative aux Libertés et Responsabilités des Universités, 10 August 2007)

<sup>48</sup> On the gap between the letter of the Bologna declaration and the current practice of university reform, see Charle [2007] and Schultheis [2008]. The same compilations provide an impressive panorama of the institutional landscape in the European social sciences as it mutates under the impact of invasive international reform.

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## A Strange Defeat: The Reception of Pierre Bourdieu's Works in Russia

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Abstract: Following the key question of *use* more than a set of research and explanatory tools, Pierre Bourdieu's works are examined in a different academic context as a career option for the receptors acting under locally dominant models of intellectual and institutional practice. The article traces Bourdieu's reception in Russia where translations and even renderings of the original publications did not arrive before the early nineties. Taking this particularity as an advantage, elements of the Soviet sociology career are exposed to analysis and recent reception trends are examined closely, in search of internationally valid patterns. The study reconstructs the way the basics of "Bourdieu in Russian" were built, responding to the possibilities and obstacles intrinsic to the early post-Soviet sociology field. On the the next step, the study pertains to the relatively weak impact of the newly created context on the academic careers in the present decade, what turned Bourdieusque approach into an essentially extradisciplinary phenomenon. The managerial-based academic power, as opposed to peer-based structures, is considered as the key factor which provides a high resistance to the critical sociology and makes it rebound from a "normal" academic career.

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*Keywords: Bourdieu, reception, Russian sociology, sociology of sociology, academic career.*

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