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The effects of social capital on economic and symbolic profits

An analysis of the field and networks of restaurant owners

Fabien Eloire

Introduction

In his work, Bourdieu appears to have dedicated less space to the concept of social capital, even though he considers it as one of the principal forms of capital in social life, alongside cultural and economic forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986a). A thorough investigation reveals that in 1980 he wrote and published a text entitled “Notes Provisoires”, which contains an innovative theoretical and empirical research programme that provides an accurate definition of social capital and several hypotheses for empirical analysis. More importantly, if we want to take serious account of Bourdieu’s statements in this short two-page text, we have to break with some of the recent works on social capital (Ponthieux 2006). Indeed, from Coleman (1988) to Burt (1995) to Putnam (1993a), who popularize the notion before its appropriation by the World Bank and the OECD, we observe various conceptions of social capital: for Coleman, social capital is conceived as an attribute of the social structure which cannot be appropriated by any individual; for Burt, social capital relates to the way an individual’s personal network is structured to achieve efficiency; for Putnam, social capital is a norm of generalised reciprocity which promotes the institutional performance of a society. A common thread that runs across these definitions is that, at the level of interpersonal interactions, there is some kind of personal network configuration that makes social capital efficient. However, there is disagreement on what forms of configuration are most efficient: while Coleman considers that efficiency comes from network closure, Burt strives to demonstrate that the brokerage position is the most profitable.

There are two reasons why Bourdieu does not address this debate in his “Notes Provisoires”: first, this debate emerged after the article was published; second, it relates to the interactionist paradigm, of which Bourdieu was critical. Indeed, his reservations towards the interactionist dimension focuses on the tenets of both network analysis and the American new economic sociology. For Bourdieu, agents have limited leeway to create more or less durable interactions between them in order to establish some exchanges which express and maintain the existence of networks, because such leeway is determined by the structure of the field which is ubiquitous and operates in a permanent and invisible manner (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). He further argues that one of the disadvantages of network analysis is that it centres on interactions, which removes the effects of structure and objective power relations. In other words, this type of analysis ignores the structural constraints exerted by the field, and tends to see only “influence effects” where in fact power relations, struggles, and domination are at play (Bourdieu 2007).

This is the reason why the question posed by the “Notes Provisoires” is that of integrating the two paradigms, relational and interactionist, that is, of compounding the objective relations which structure a field, on the one hand, and the inter-subjective relations which compose a social network, on the other. This integration of these two paradigms has yet to be explored. We attempt to tackle this issue in the present chapter, by conducting a case study of a sample of restaurant owners which reconstitute a complete network (Eloire et al. 2011). In the first part of the paper, we present our idea of Bourdieu’s research programme as it was developed in the “Notes Provisoires”. In the second

part, we apply this research programme empirically by proposing an accurate measure of social capital, and by showing the effects of this measure on the accumulation of symbolic capital.

An alternative research programme for social capital

Our first objective is to show that Bourdieu's article contains a detailed research programme on social capital, one that has never been applied before. To this end, we begin by returning to the definition of social capital that this article develops. Then we describe the analysis model, and finally we present the hypotheses that emerge from this model.

The Bourdieusian definition of social capital

Within the field–habitus–capital theoretical architecture, the notion of social capital was employed to describe all the situations in which cultural capital and economic capital are not sufficient to explain what agents or groups are doing when they “work” to establish and maintain connections which are durable, permanent, and useful. Social capital constitutes a theorisation of what common sense means by “having relationships”. The idea is that connections allow agents and groups to accumulate a form of capital, which are not their own, but accessed indirectly through interpersonal ties, and which can be mobilised when necessary (Bourdieu 2007). Thinking in terms of social capital refers to the interactionist paradigm, which focuses on visible, palpable interactions, and manifests in meetings or concrete exchanges within the physical space. Hence, this conception invites us to consider as “work” a whole set of practices generally equivalent to idleness, leisure, sociability: exchanges of visits, letters, presents, marriages, etc.

Social capital therefore constitutes the way by which the notion of exchange, as the basis of a “network” of connections or alliances, finds its place in Bourdieu's sociology. This does not happen automatically. In fact, the concepts of cultural and economic capital are specifically fitted to the application of the relational paradigm (Bourdieu 1980g), in which the objective properties of agents directly contribute to the structuring of the social space (Bourdieu 1979) and objective social relations. What is different about the notion of social capital is that it is situated at the intersection of the two paradigms, relational and interactionist, which tends to promote a dual reading and assessment: it could either be considered as a “meta-capital” without a specific content (Godechot and Mariot 2004), acting in a rather indirect way, by multiplying the effects of other forms of capital and improving their profitability; or it could be seen in terms of what it produces in the social world, that is, in terms of all the practices that induce agents in each field to accumulate social resources, transmit them, and reproduce them.

These two dimensions are inseparable. Indeed, for Bourdieu, while social capital is never “completely independent” of the economic and cultural forms of capital, there also exists an “irreducibility” of inter-subjective interactions compared to objective relations of proximity within the social space. This is what constitutes the specificity of social capital. Thus, to construct an empirical measure of the latter, it does not suffice to study the objective structure of a field (in terms of economic and cultural capital); attention should also be given to network relationships, that is, to the whole set of durable and useful connections that each particular agent or group establishes and sustains with other social agents or groups. Here we are confronted with a methodological issue which remains largely unexplored and relies on the task of determining the relationship between empirical data on agents' objective properties and their inter-subjective interactions. We address this issue in more detail in the following sections, where we describe the analysis model and conduct our case study.

The analysis model in “Notes Provisoires”

As mentioned above, social capital holds a dual meaning, so its empirical reconstruction necessarily requires different indicators that will allow us to reconstitute both objective relations and inter-subjective interactions that are inherent in social capital. Godechot and Mariot purport that, even though researchers roughly agree on the “volume dimension” of social capital, which renders it an “increasing function of the number of relations” possessed by an agent, they seem to disagree on which of the two ideal-typical configurations of a network, namely brokerage and closure, would potentially be the most profitable. This controversy (which, in fact, might only be resolved if we consider that the effectiveness of one or the other configuration depends on the context, as stressed by Burt 2005) ultimately overlooks the fact that, in addition to its volume and interactionist dimensions, social capital also possesses a structural dimension, linked to the distribution and weight of the other forms of capital (economic and cultural) in the composition of social capital.

Network analysis has widely contributed to the development of some tools and empirical measures that take into account the volume dimension of social capital (Lazega 1998). To incorporate the structural dimension in measures of social capital, we must first construct the structure of the field to determine the objective position of agents and the composition of their capital in terms of volume and structure; then we must construct the network of connections of agents within their field. As an indirect form of capital, which is mobilised when necessary, social capital could be measured, according to Bourdieu’s definition, as the sum of the volumes of the other forms of capital (economic and cultural) possessed by each agent to whom a given agent is linked. To this measure of social capital that reflects its volume dimension, we must add another structural measure (expressed in percentage terms) that reveals the orientation of the network either towards agents who possess more cultural capital, or agents who possess more economic capital.

Hence, the analysis model applied here requires: first, the construction of a field as a contextual social space; second, adequate measures of the social capital of each agent, which appear in the model as independent variables; and third, some measures of efficiency, performance (economic and symbolic), and differential profitability of agents that appear in the model as dependent variables.

Hypotheses on the effects of social capital

For Bourdieu, the concept of social capital is used to describe a mechanism, which is not only economic, but also applicable to several other dimensions (cultural, symbolic, or social), and which is based on two ideas, the idea of accumulation, and the idea of time, because time is necessary to accumulate capital. Thereby, each accumulated capital is the product of the history of its accumulation (Bourdieu 1986a). In the case of economic and cultural capital, it is the relationship between habitus and field that determines how the accumulation process occurs and why it generally takes the shape of a reproduction process. In this process, according to Bourdieu, interactions tend to play a secondary role, because “networks” primarily emanate from the objective structure, and depend on power relations and struggles within the field. However, as Bourdieu suggests, in some cases we need to introduce the concept of social capital in our analysis. In his “Notes Provisoires”, not only does he propose a definition of social capital, but he also suggests two generic hypotheses: the first one relates to the interdependence of social capital with other forms of capital, and the second one relates to the multiplier effect of social capital.

As regards the first hypothesis on interdependence, we recall the idea that social capital is “never completely independent” of the other forms of capital. According to Bourdieu, interactions actually emanate from objective structures, because the “choices” which guide the forms of inter-recognitions between agents presuppose a minimum of “objective” heterogeneity: this is related to the classical hypothesis of “social and cultural homogamy” (Girard 1964). Girard claims that,

statistically, people marry from their own socio-economic group; likewise, in our study, we expect that people are friends with those who are similar to them by the homophily principle, which means that “birds of a feather flock together”. Thus, on the one hand, we expect a significant and positive correlation between the volume of social capital and the volume of the other forms of capital (economic and cultural); on the other hand, we expect a significant and positive correlation between the volume of cultural (or economic) capital of an agent and the share of cultural (or economic) capital possessed by the agents of his/her network.

As regards the second hypothesis on the multiplier effect of social capital, the idea is to consider social capital as a “meta-capital”, acting indirectly and multiplying the profitability of other forms of capital. This idea is clearly developed in the “Notes Provisoires”, where Bourdieu stressed that: at a nearly equivalent level of (cultural or economic) capital, a higher level of social capital explains a higher profitability of (cultural or economic) capital. The underlying rationale is that differences in profitability could be explained by the capacity of some individuals to indirectly mobilise the capital of a group. Thereby, we expect a significant and positive correlation between the volume of social capital and the indicators of differential profitability studied, a phenomenon to be observed at both the macro and the meso level, that is, at each level of (cultural or economic) capital.

However stimulating, this hypothesis complicates the description of the accumulation process of capital. Indeed, the aim is to show that “relationships” can effectively exert a “multiplier effect” on agents’ own capital (Bourdieu 1980a). Methodologically, testing this hypothesis requires that we design a specific survey, which will allow us to conjoin correspondence analysis (statistical tool used to describe a field, e.g. Leroux and Rouanet 2010) and network analysis (tool used to report regularities in interactions, e.g. Wasserman and Faust 1994; Freeman 2004; Lazega 1998).

The effect of social capital: a case study in the gastronomic field

Bourdieu’s research often predisposes us to think about social capital in relation to the “dominant classes” (elites, upper-class bourgeois, heirs, nobility). But it should not be forgotten that the effects of social capital can be understood at all levels of the social space and within each field. A generic analysis model of the functioning of social capital becomes possible when we apply the principle of the structural homology of fields, which postulates that each field reproduces, at its own level, the structure and the mechanisms of the social space (Bourdieu 1979). An example is the sub-field of commercial gastronomy in Lille (Northern France), which we consider here as an empirical case study.

Positions and stances in the gastronomic sub-field of Lille

In Figure 11.1 (see Annex), we observe that restaurant owners are distributed along two axes, reminiscent of those that shape the social space. In particular, the vertical axis represents the overall volume of capital, that is, “the set of actually usable resources and powers – economic, cultural, social capital” (Bourdieu 1979 trans. Nice 1984: 114), while the horizontal axis represents a “chiasm structure”, so that “the structure of the distribution of economic capital is symmetrical and opposite to that of cultural capital” (Bourdieu 1979 trans. Nice 1984: 120). The general trends that we discover in the structure of the gastronomic sub-field, suggest that, on the one hand, there is an opposition between the dominant and dominated, and, on the other hand, among the dominant, there is an opposition between two poles: the first one is controlled by the material interests of monetary profitability that restaurants pursue as firms; and the second one is controlled by the symbolic interests of gastronomic recognition that skilled professionals pursue as “Chef”. To better explain

our method of multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), we conduct two separate analyses for cultural capital and economic capital.

With regard to cultural capital (Figure 11.2 in the Annex), the horizontal axis contains a summary of the cultural capital hierarchy between restaurant owners. As we move towards the left of the axis, we encounter those who have no diploma in catering and no experience as an employee in this business before being themselves owners of a restaurant. As we move toward the right of the axis, we come across those who, before opening their own restaurant, had a diploma in catering, had gained multiple skills (in cooking, serving tables), and had extensive experience in a number of successive jobs (up to four) at different gastronomic restaurants nationwide (including highly rated, Michelin-starred establishments). Towards the centre of this axis, we find those who have some, but less prestigious, experience as an employee, serving tables in places like brasseries or traditional, regional restaurants. This MCA underlines the weight that a certain state of cultural capital has within this professional milieu, one that Bourdieu refers to as the institutionalised state of cultural capital, or cultural capital in its objectified form as a title, such as an education degree, which is conceived as a certificate of cultural competency that “confers on its holder a conventional value” (Bourdieu 1986a: 248). Indeed, in Figure 11.2 we observe that the modalities that derive from one’s diploma, know-how, and work experience (diamond-shaped points in the figure) contribute more to the configuration of this axis than those that are concentrated in the dotted circle (triangular points in the figure) and are related to an embodied state of cultural capital, which is inculcated and assimilated through time and by heredity. Finally, family background, region of origin, having created or reclaimed the business, and the number of years in this line of work appear weakly discriminating variables in the formation of cultural capital.

With regard to economic capital (Figure 11.3 in the Annex), the horizontal axis highlights the organisational and legal principles that shape firms. As we move towards the left of the axis, we encounter small restaurants that: have a capacity to host less than 40 guests and to employ one or two workers; have a single proprietor; are open less than seven times a week; and have a maximum turnover of EUR 250,000 per year. As we move towards the right of the axis, we come across larger establishments that: can host over 90 guests and employ more than ten workers; are open more than ten times per week (up to seven days a week, lunch and dinner); have a turnover above €800,000 per year; and are registered as partnerships or simplified joint stock companies (but not private limited companies, aka SARL), where investors extend beyond the family circle and owners are likely to have other restaurants. As we show in our analysis of the field, stances are never independent of the positions which restaurant owners have at the moment they start up their business, and which are determined by the volume of the cultural capital owners possess and its relative weight to their economic capital. In the MCA of the gastronomic sub-field, we add some supplementary variables to these active variables, in order to capture the effect of the two forms of cultural and economic capital on restaurant owners’ stances toward their culinary style and their access to symbolic capital (Figure 11.4 in the Annex). The analysis demonstrates that the reconciliation of material and symbolic interests, money and food, is much more difficult to achieve as one rises in the hierarchy of capital and gains market power. The nature of this power differs depending on where a restaurant is placed along one or the other pole of the field.

As far as restaurants’ stances towards culinary style are concerned, we note that the volume of cultural capital possessed by restaurant owners determines their choice of culinary style. In the “gastronomic pole” of the sub-field, an informal hierarchy between culinary styles appears: from the “traditional” style adopted by restaurants that are relatively less endowed with cultural capital (e.g. diplomas, experience), to the “gastronomic” style adopted by restaurants that are well endowed

with cultural capital. Conversely, in the “economic pole”, we note that restaurant owners that are better endowed with economic capital tend to choose a “brasserie” style, or specialise in certain foods (potatoes, fish, crepes, etc.), so they cover the bottom range of low-priced dishes. By standardising the production of meals and controlling costs, these establishments are relatively larger in size and exploit economies of scale. In this way, they have more leverage in negotiations with their suppliers and their employees (Gadrey et al. 2002).

Similarly, with regard to the accumulation of symbolic capital, we observe that the higher the rank of a restaurant owner in the cultural capital hierarchy, the higher is his/her rank in the symbolic capital hierarchy (which is objectified through professional rewards, including references in and awards from gastronomic “guides”, as well as peer co-optations for entry in “honorary associations” of chefs). Thus, in the gastronomic pole, we discover restaurants that cover the top-range, high-priced dishes and get their reputation from the signature name of the chef. The size of these restaurants is smaller than those located in the opposite, economic pole, and their owners are committed to stringent quality requirements, which favour neither higher economic returns, nor greater leverage in their transactions with suppliers and employees (“we can’t compromise on quality”, “the quality comes at a price”; Dallery et al. 2009).

To construct our indicator of symbolic capital, we used a series of gastronomic guides, each of which offers its own annual awards: stars for the Michelin or the Bottin Gourmand; notes for the Gault & Millau; points for the Champerard; and plates for the Pudlo. Our MCA shows that, while gastronomic restaurants obtain awards, some restaurants situated in the economic pole are also likely to possess symbolic capital, but they are not distinguished by awards, only by references in one of the specialised guides. For our indicator, we also consider honorary associations, particularly those that have some members in the metropolis of Lille, but exert national influence. These associations are run by co-optation and sponsorship. They all work to defend gastronomy, but each has its own conception of what it is: for instance, the so-called Générations. C, Cuisine & Cultures adopts a very modern and “nouvelle cuisine” outlook; the Ordre International des Disciples d’Auguste Escoffier or the Club Gastronomique Prosper Montagné promote a more traditional cuisine; and the Jeunes Restaurateurs d’Europe and Maîtres Cuisiniers de France have an interest in traditional cuisine as well, but enjoy a more prestigious position.

Professional friendships as a matrix of social capital

Findings from our social network analysis demonstrate that restaurant owners are more isolated from each other in the economic pole of the gastronomic sub-field. To the contrary, in the gastronomic pole, informal contacts between restaurant owners are numerous and frequent. It is these contacts that in 1999 led to the establishment of a formal association, the Club des Tables Gourmandes, which is considered as the most emblematic association in our study. The club brings together about 40 chefs, who are exclusively from the Lille metropolitan area, and have been co-opted among the most prominent and most recognized for their expertise. The existence of such an association is in a way the outcome of all these informal activities of relational investment that we have been investigating. The underlying network of professional friendships between restaurant owners constitutes the basis for the construction of our social capital indicator.

The contradictory expression of “professional friendship” aptly captures relational activities between restaurant owners. These relations indicate the establishment of durable relationships of trust between agents in a professional, yet objectively competitive, market framework. These professional friendship ties function as the reciprocity cycles that Bourdieu describes in his generator model

(Bourdieu 1980g: 171). They facilitate exchanges of various useful resources (material or symbolic), without reducing these exchanges to their pure utilitarian or commercial expression:

Professional friends are people I have known since my studies and maintained contact with, irrespective of whether I had the chance to work with them or not. In addition to our friendship, we are in the same line of work, so we continue to phone each other to say, hey, I need some advice, some help, and some exchanges. In this way, we created a professional side to supplement the friendship we already had. (Restaurant owner, traditional cuisine)

This exploratory interview extract is consistent with our individual survey results. Indeed, we find evidence that social resources circulate through friendship ties: there is a strong statistical correlation between considering someone as a friend and exchanging with that person different social resources (e.g. information, help, customers) (Eloire 2010). This reveals the importance of friendship and network relations in our analysis of social capital. These durable, permanent, and useful connections structure exchanges between agents, because they induce regularities in the circulation of social resources and they constitute the visible expression of this form of capital, which is obtained by proxy, and mobilized when necessary. The usefulness of an empirical knowledge of these networks is reinforced when the survey protocol allows us to capture the reciprocity that lies in these connections, as is the case in our survey. The reader can consult the methodological annex for a more detailed description of our fieldwork research (survey questionnaire, choice of sample and variables, construction of the field and networks, and calculation of indicators).

To construct our indicators of social capital, in terms of both volume and structure, we chose the network that consists of links of mutual friendship between restaurant owners: this network (Figure 11.5 in the Annex) consists of 566 links between 164 restaurant owners from the 283 owners that are included in our sample. In other words, 58 per cent of our sample of restaurant owners claims to have relationships of mutual friendship, while 42 per cent claim they do not. Of the 58 per cent, 22 per cent have only a single friend with whom they have mutual relations, 17 per cent have two or three friends, and 20 per cent have four or more. The maximum number of mutual friends identified in our study is 13. We now have all the information we need to test the hypotheses derived from the analytical model of the “Notes Provisoires”.

Testing the hypotheses of interdependence and multiplier effects

We first test the hypothesis concerning the interdependence of social capital with the other forms of capital. In Table 11.1 (see Annex), we provide evidence of a strong and positive correlation between cultural capital and social capital, as well as between economic capital and social capital. This result indicates that social capital is never completely independent of the other forms of capital.

However, to have a more precise idea of the link between the objective structures of the field and the interactionist process of the social construction of gastronomy, we can examine the link between the structure of the individual capital of an agent and the structure of his/her social capital. This relates to the social homophily hypothesis. Indeed, our results in Table 11.2 (see Annex) reveal a positive correlation between the volume of cultural (or economic) capital that is individually owned by an agent and the volume of cultural (or economic) capital that can be accessed through his/her social capital. In other words: the higher the volume of cultural (or economic) capital that belongs to the agent him/herself (to the ego), the higher the share of cultural (or economic) capital in his/her social capital (his/her alters). This implies that connections are not randomly established, but follow a specific social logic: agents that belong to a certain pole in the sub-field are more likely to choose their friends from the same pole. But if these interactions reinforce the structural effects of the field,

then the specificity of social capital is to be sought elsewhere, particularly in its multiplier effect, which we now turn to.

Social capital does not rely on a purely utilitarian conception of agents' interactions. It perceives social relations as an act of investment, the efficiency of which is precisely based on the essential principle that such investment goes unseen as an activity and unrecognised as a source for useful and efficient capital. But the efficiency in question here is not the one economists talk about. The social resources exchanged daily between restaurant owners (e.g. information, help, customers) are not only material but also symbolic, and they facilitate access to monetary profit as well as access to symbolic profit. Thus, the efficiency of social capital must first be considered in its dimension of symbolic capital accumulation, as indicated by the first axis of Figure 11.6 in the Annex (principal components analysis, PCA). Indeed, the figure brings to the fore an opposition between two groups of correlated variables: one group includes three variables, namely the volume of an agent's economic capital, the share of economic capital in his/her structure of social capital, and monetary profit; the other group also consists of three variables, namely the volume of cultural, social, and symbolic capital of restaurant owners.

These findings reveal that social capital exerts two opposite effects: the higher the volume of social capital, the higher the volume of symbolic capital, while the monetary gain achieved is lower. Apparently, restaurant owners must choose between these two conflicting goals. However, social capital has the capacity to impact monetary profits, as long as one takes into account its volume, as well as its structure. Indeed, an important element of social capital is the share of economic capital in the structure of social capital: the more significant this share is, the higher the monetary profit. In other words, our results demonstrate that having some friends (even a few) who are situated in the economic pole is positively correlated with economic success. But, in the final analysis, the correlations produced from our PCA with concern to social capital appear as secondary, since there are deeper trends which link symbolic profit and the volume of cultural capital, on the one hand, and monetary profit and the volume of economic capital, on the other. So, our analysis tends to confirm that social capital acts, in an indirect way, as a sort of "meta-capital".

To complete our analysis, we must still show that social capital is likely to have a multiplier effect on cultural capital and economic capital: if two agents have almost the same amount of cultural (or economic) capital, then the one that has more social capital will be able to accumulate more symbolic (or monetary) capital. To conduct this test we must create groups with equivalent amounts of cultural capital and economic capital, and then examine within each group whether a higher volume of social capital is effectively associated with a higher level of symbolic or monetary profit. First of all, with regard to monetary profits, results are depicted in Tables 11.3 and 11.4 (see Annex). They reveal no multiplier effect on the part of social capital. This can be explained by the idea that the accumulation of economic profit in the market seems to obey other logics beyond that of the instrumental use of friendship relations (Dallery et al. 2009).

To the contrary, with regard to symbolic profit, our results offer evidence that social capital produces a rather strong multiplier effect. In the case of economic capital, we observe that, in each group (except one), the more social capital one has, the more symbolic profits one gains. Results are similar for cultural capital (though there is an insignificant effect in the two first groups, which can be explained on the basis that symbolic capital is nearly missing at these levels of cultural capital). Overall, these results offer evidence of the specificity of social capital relative to other forms of capital, as well as the specific modalities of its functioning.

Conclusion

In this article, we tried to reconsider Bourdieu's propositions on social capital. From our attentive review of his "Notes Provisoires", published in 1980, we discover not only a definition of social capital, but also an innovative research programme, in that it combines two definitions of "social relations" and two paradigms: relational and interactionist. Methodologically, the operationalization of the Bourdieusian definition of social capital establishes a specific device of scientific inquiry which allows us to conjoin correspondence analysis and network analysis.

There are certain steps we need to follow to apply the alternative model developed here: first, we construct the field as a social and structured contextual space; second, we accurately measure each agent's social capital, which functions as the explanatory variable in the model; third, we adopt measures of monetary profit and symbolic efficiency that are used as dependent variables. To complete these steps and offer an empirical foundation to our model, we test two hypotheses derived from the "Notes Provisoires": the interdependence and the multiplier effect hypothesis. Our case study provides strong evidence that social capital is interdependent with other forms of capital, and also possesses a kind of specificity. As a "meta-capital", it exerts indirect effects, which makes it all the more effective because they are largely denied on the basis of friendship, social exchange resources, and reciprocity cycles.

Methodological annex

Fieldwork research and survey

Our empirical data on the gastronomic sub-field of the metropolis of Lille was derived from fieldwork research that was conducted from February to October 2006 and was based on a face-to-face survey questionnaire. We interviewed about 300 restaurant owners. To construct the questionnaire, we conducted a pilot-survey, which took place from April to October 2005 and consisted of ten semi-structured interviews with a fairly open framework of qualitative questions. The questionnaire was separated into three parts, each of which corresponded to a specific set of variables: (1) the social attributes of restaurant owners; (2) the economic characteristics of their establishments; and (3) several network variables, including: transfers or exchanges between restaurant owners; social resources identified during the pilot-survey; informal discussions about economic conditions; transmission of interesting information; sending over customers; mutual support.

Choice of sample

To define our sample of restaurant owners, we used different criteria: to be located in the metropolis of Lille; to be owner of a traditional-type restaurant as opposed to a "fast-food restaurant" (according to the French Trade Sector Code NAF); to be legally independent (we excluded restaurants that belonged to a chain or franchise). Some of them would also need: to participate in a network where social resources are transferred and exchanged between restaurant owners; to take part in certain institutional relationships in the business, such as being a member of an honorary or commercial association, or a member of a trade union, or being referenced in a gastronomic guide (Eloire et al. 2011). We must note that restaurant owners did not need to fulfil all these criteria to be included in the sample. Satisfying several of the aforementioned criteria sufficed for the purposes of our analysis.

Construction of the field

We construct the field by using the two parts of our questionnaire dedicated to “the social attributes of the restaurant owners” and “the economic characteristics of their establishments”. By means of a multiple components analysis (MCA), we describe the social space of the restaurant owners in its various aspects (economic, cultural, symbolic) and develop its objective structures. The MCA is composed of 18 active variables (61 items) and five supplementary variables (20 items). The active variables are used to measure cultural capital (nine variables, 30 items) and economic capital (nine variables, 31 items). The supplementary variables are related to culinary style (one variable, seven items) and symbolic capital (four variables, 13 items). Two additional MCAs were conducted: one only with cultural capital variables, and the other only with economic capital variables. A principal components analysis (PCA) was also conducted with the variables of symbolic capital. These complementary analyses allow us not only to offer a better interpretation of MCA results for the entire gastronomic field; they also provide for a quantitative measure of the three forms of capital (economic, cultural, symbolic) by using axis 1 of each of the MCA and PCA. These measures can then be used to test for correlations with quantitative measures of social capital.

Social network analysis

The sociometric part of our inquiry centres on the reconstitution of interactions between restaurant owners and forms the basis for the construction of our social capital indicator. While social attributes allow us to retrace the field of objective relations, the study of interpersonal contacts and social resource circulation enables us to reconstitute networks.

The name generator used in the questionnaire was: “who are the restaurant owners you personally know, and who know you personally too?” Thus, respondents are asked to list the restaurant owners with whom they are linked. This is an open-ended question that is only intended to provide a list of contacts and stress aspects of reciprocity: respondents are not called upon to cite people who are considered “popular” (as in the media, for example), but people with whom they are likely to interact. Once the list has been established, specific questions are asked about the type of link maintained with each person cited: length of the relationship; the nature of the relationship – familial or friendship; and the potential exchange of social resources.

Another point worth mentioning is that our sociometric survey uses respondents’ memory and subjectivity, and so the questionnaire records agents’ perceptions of each other. But our survey follows an iterative process: when one individual is cited, then this person is also interviewed, so that for each interaction we possess information about both sides of the relationship. Thus, while the point of view of ego is subjective, by having the point of view of alter, we give the inter-subjective relation an objective character. It is when the relationship is reciprocal that the two subjectivities meet and a reciprocity cycle is at work.

Calculating social capital

Our goal is to measure social capital of Rest40, who has cited as friends Rest26, Rest36, Rest32, Rest53, and Rest27, each of which has also cited Rest40 as a friend. In Table 11.5 below, columns Capitulc and Capiteco depict scores of cultural capital and economic capital, respectively, of Rest26, Rest36, Rest32, Rest53 and Rest27. These scores are equivalent to the value that the two forms of cultural and economic capital obtain on axis 1 of the corresponding MCAs. The volume of Rest40’s social capital is the sum of these ten scores and is equal to 11.44276. The structure of social capital is the share of cultural capital (64 per cent) compared to the share of economic capital (36 per cent) in the volume of Rest40’s social capital.

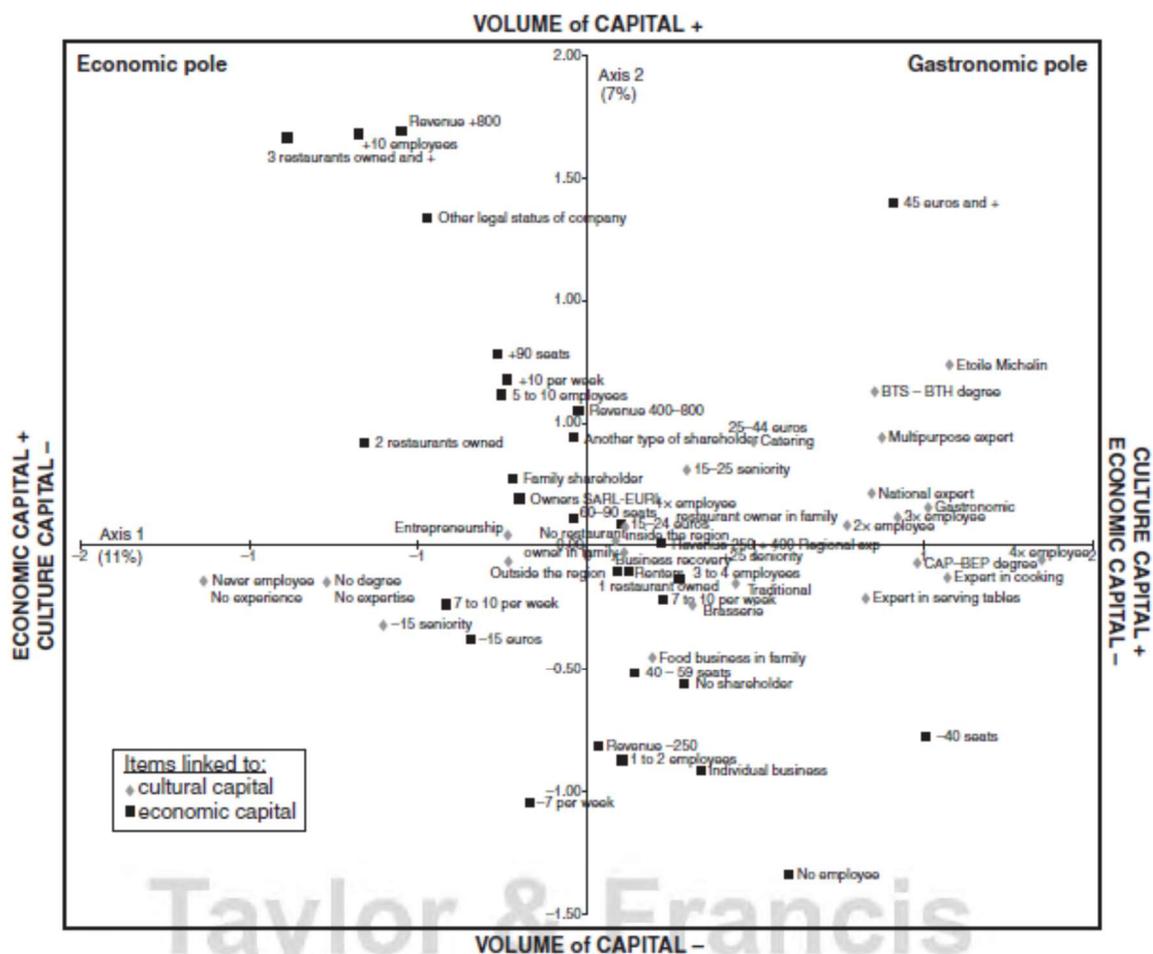


Figure 11.1 The structure of the gastronomic sub-field in the Lille metropolis.

Notes

- The abbreviations in the figures stand for:
 SARL: limited liability company.
 EURL: sole proprietorship limited liability.
 CAP: certificate of professional skills.
 BEP: vocational studies certificate.
 BTS: higher technician certificate.
 BTH: bachelor of technology hotellerie.

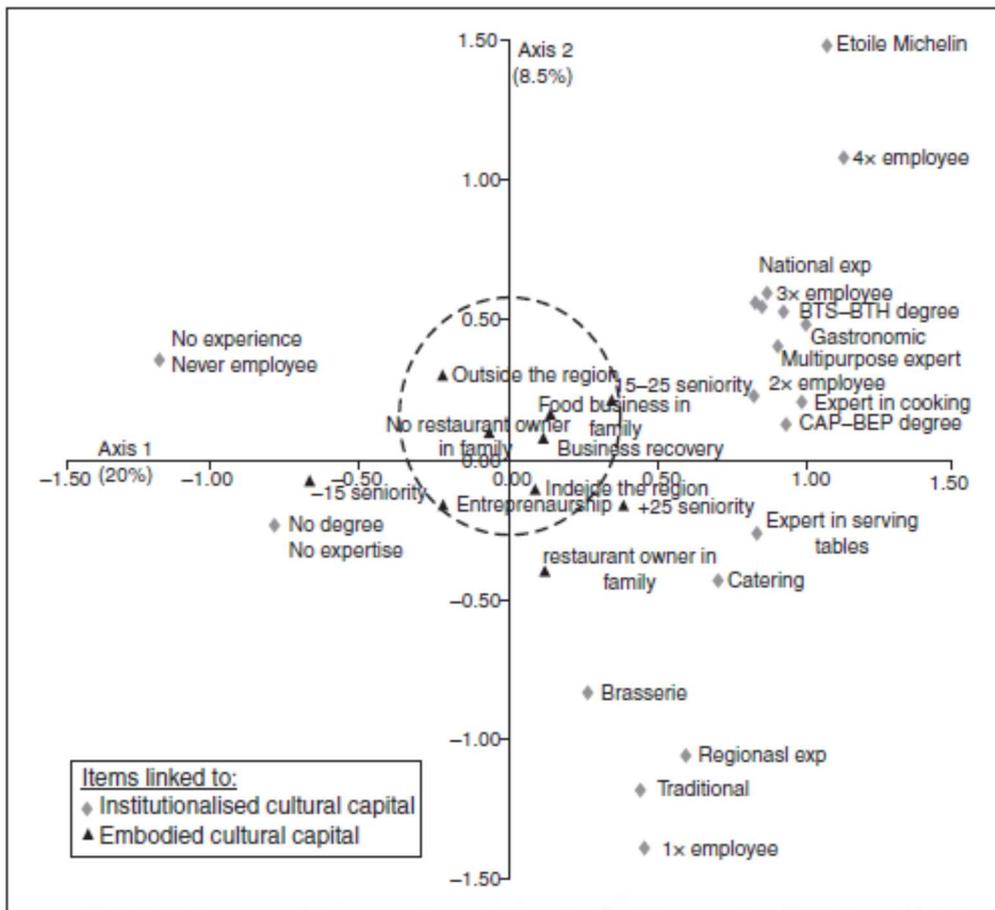


Figure 11.2 Cultural capital.

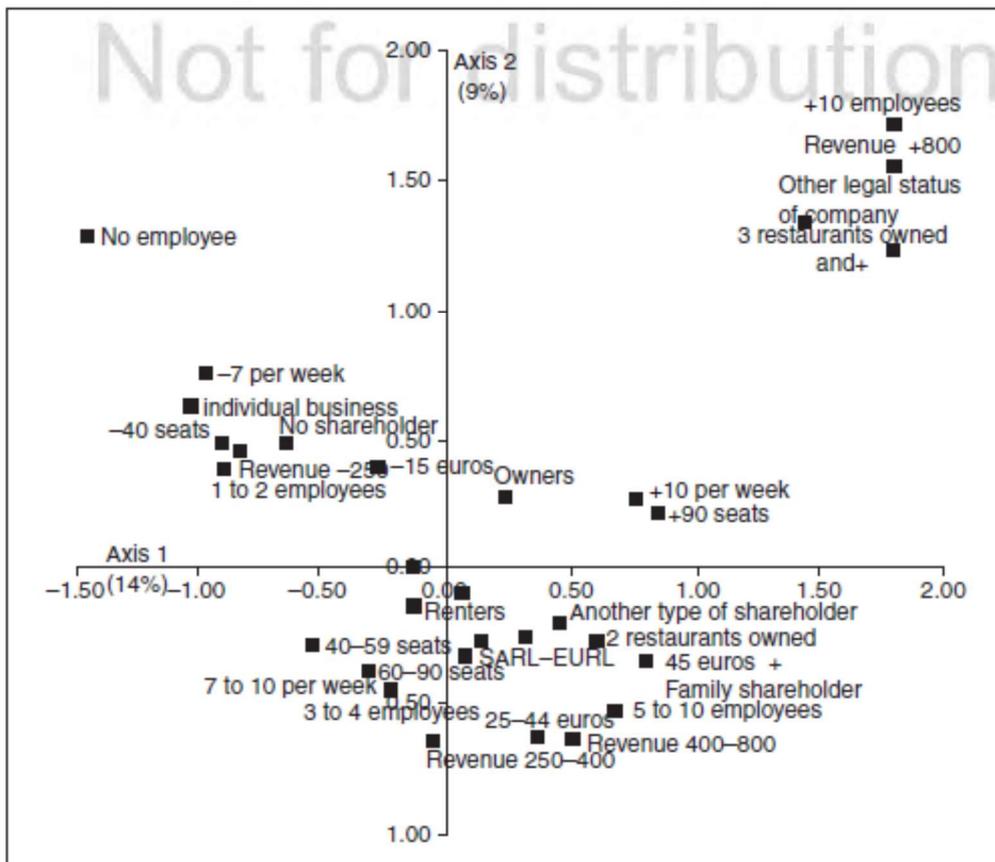


Figure 11.3 Economic capital.

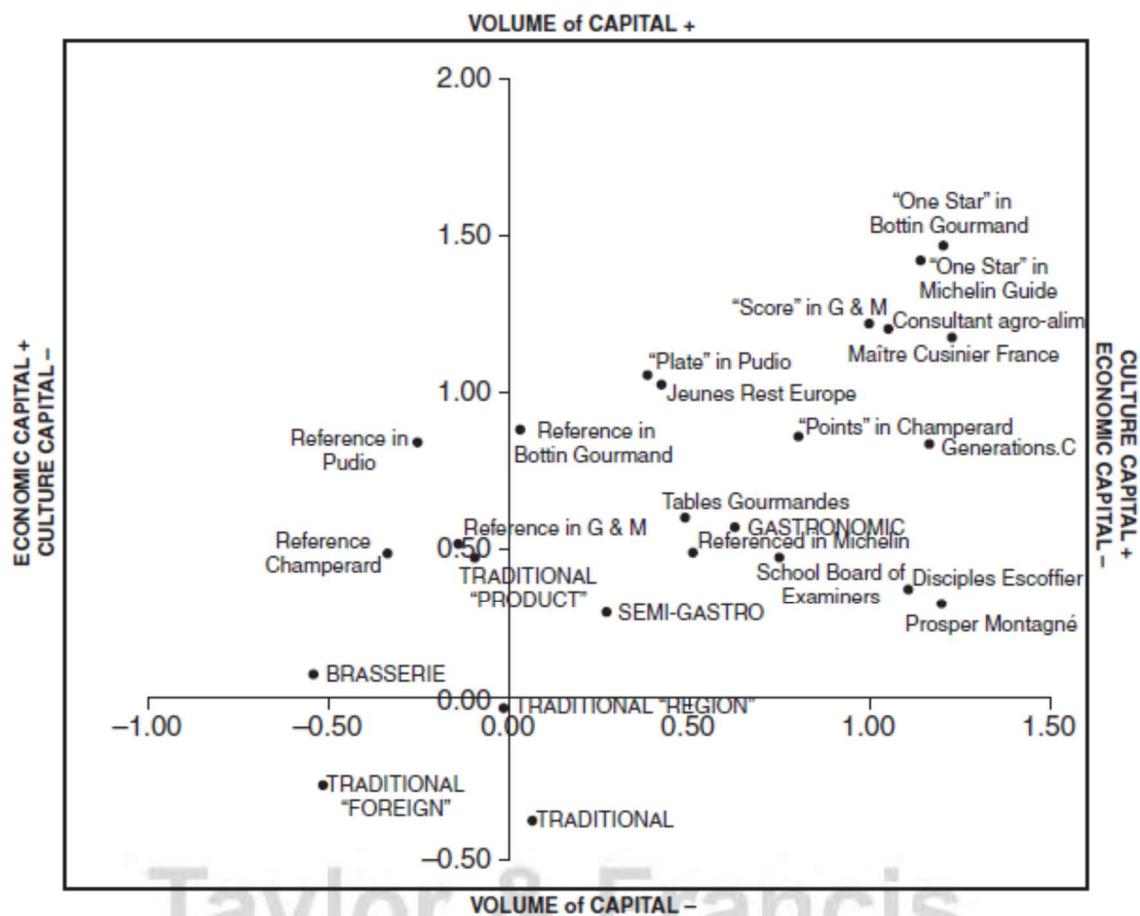


Figure 11.4 Symbolic capital.



Figure 11.5 Network of links of mutual friendship.

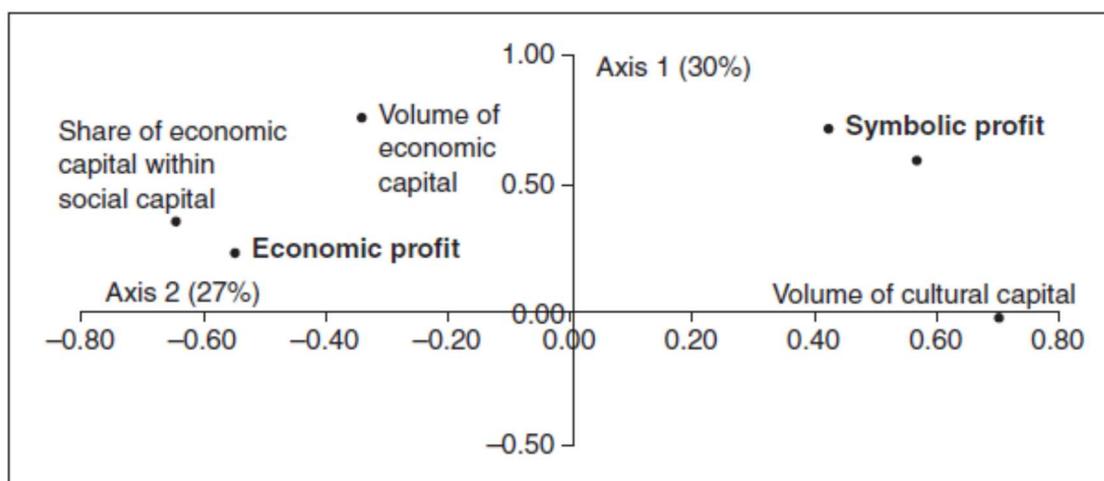


Figure 11.6 The effect of social capital (PCA).

Table 11.1 The volume of social capital is interdependent with the other forms of capital

	<i>Volume of social capital</i>
Economic capital	0.16 (<0.01)
Cultural capital	0.23 (<0.01)

Table 11.2 The interdependence of social capital with economic and cultural capital

	<i>% of economic capital between social capital</i>	<i>% of cultural capital between social capital</i>
Economic capital	0.36 (<0.01)	-0.36 (<0.01)
Cultural capital	-0.31 (<0.01)	0.31 (<0.01)

Table 11.3 Multiplier effect – correlations between social capital and symbolic profit

<i>Classes of...</i>	<i>... cultural capital</i>	<i>... economic capital</i>
1	0.06 (0.66)	0.50 (>0.01)
2	0.06 (0.70)	0.28 (0.05)
3	0.26 (0.05)	0.06 (0.65)
4	0.40 (>0.01)	0.77 (>0.01)
5	0.35 (>0.01)	0.45 (>0.01)
6	0.77 (>0.01)	0.51 (>0.01)

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