
Preface

It was on one of those colorful, battered Guatemalan buses transporting the indigenous peasants across the highlands that, in 1983, I began to read Bourdieu's *Outline of a theory of praxis*. People around me sat closely packed among sacks of corn, some with hens on their laps. Military patrols at the important road crossings made us get off the bus and on again every now and then. So my reading of Bourdieu was somewhat interrupted by one of the lesser hardships of war. But the reading was as necessary as it was pleasant. I was preparing field research for 1985 and 1986 on religious movements in Central American war zones, and was acquainted with Berger/Luckmann's phenomenological sociology—which was, at that time, in Germany considered as state of the art for doctoral research such as the one I was going to conduct. I was, however, not convinced of its usefulness for my task.

When we were ordered to leave the bus, the peasants were noticeably fearful which showed in the way they quickly moved to get out of the bus and lined up alongside the vehicle. Some were interviewed by the soldiers, sometimes in a friendly and almost joking way, sometimes in an outright interrogation. Imagine a tall and sturdy military official of the Guatemalan counter-insurgency army standing in front of a small, skinny farmer with his raddled sandals and threadbare traditional trousers. What kind of fun could the officer show that would not scare the peasant? Or else, was this particular peasant collaborating with the military? What would his fellow villagers think and do about jokes and smiles between the peasant and the officer?

War is an intense social context, and it is hard to imagine two “subjects”—for instance, a peasant and an officer—constructing their social reality by merely intersubjective communication, as if they were not turned into “master and slave” (Hegel) by their objective positions in the social structure even before any conversation could start. Their encounter bears all the burden of social inequality and violence that characterizes the difference between the social positions of both men; and it shapes their religious beliefs as well. Even if they belong to the same

religious tradition—Pentecostal in this case—their religious beliefs answer to completely different contexts of life and religious needs. Their discourses may sound quite similar at first; but listening more closely and with attention to the contextual meaning one recognizes two very different religious identities. Similar, however, is the intensity of their faith. Religious movements—particularly Pentecostals, and even more so in armed conflicts—have strong religious convictions that, during war, guide their strategies of survival. These convictions have to be taken into account by an interpretative sociology (according to Max Weber’s “understanding,” *verstehen*). However, convictions are almost systematically misunderstood if they are taken as a context-free symbolism, as sign-systems believed in by free individuals. The semantics by which actors generate their convictions acquire their meaning only if they are used within social contexts. These contexts are constituted by objective conditions, such as war, poverty, or wealth. But for an understanding of the relation between these conditions and the convictions and practices of the actors, an “actorless” functionalism or a doctrine of a strong social or biological determination of human thought and action is of little use. Bourdieu might have had similar feelings when he was performing his first field studies during the Algerian war. In any case, he designed a theory suitable for harsh conditions and strong beliefs. At least, reading into praxeology presented me with a timely answer for an urgent theoretical need. The book turned out a pleasant read and—at the same time, during the bus ride—it was great to see that this theory really helped me to understand the situation.

Later on, the theory of the social space—as developed in Bourdieu’s *Distinction*—was to provide a frame to locate the peasant, the army official, and any other interlocutor in their respective positions in society. Even further on, the model of the religious field served to distinguish different religious actors, such as Pentecostal congregations, the Roman Catholic hierarchy, Base Communities, in terms of the power they exerted relative to one another. Both models provide objective frames to understand better the central object of research: religious convictions in their social context.

According to this principal interest, what I was really fascinated by were Bourdieu’s thoughts about habitus, practical sense, and practical logic—as developed in *Outline* and subsequently in *The Logic of Practice*. The concept of practical logic allowed me to understand how convictions, knowledge, and even calculus work in social relations; and thus it helped to explain better the socially shared meaning and its effects on social relations as well as on the exchange of goods and, eventually, on social structure. The concepts of practical sense and habitus facilitated the understanding of how such knowledge, convictions, preferences etc. are created by humans as cognitive, emotional, and bodily dispositions of perception, judgment,

and action in interdependence with the social relations and structures that actors live in. These concepts also helped me to see how convictions and preferences operated by means of the practical logic in different fields of praxis, and the religious field in particular. If I should find out the logic according to which the religious, political, and social convictions, indeed knowledge in general, of the military official, the peasant, and all the others operated, I could not only describe what they were doing, but understand why they were doing it. In Max Weber's terms, I could understand their motivation and how it is that sometimes people stubbornly keep saying and doing the same outdated things, yet at other times they rapidly change their minds, undergo a religious conversion, or find creative new ways of problem-solving and even of "re-inventing" themselves.

While I was fascinated by these perspectives, I also noticed that Bourdieu had not developed methods and models for qualitative research on human attitudes, especially not for research by means of interviews.¹ With regard to Bourdieu's writings on religion, the situation was similar. His articles from the early seventies were interesting from a theoretical point of view, but they proposed quite a narrow concept of religion and did not provide adequate tools for a study like the one I was going to realize.² Clearly, it was a better idea for my project to stick to habitus, practical sense, and practical logic.³ So, if I was going to do research on religious practical logics of Pentecostals in the Guatemalan and Nicaraguan wars, I had to develop a Bourdieu-based method of my own.

In January 1985, my wife, an anthropologist specializing in Mesoamerica, and I set out for two years of field studies in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the USA.⁴ After conducting some explorative interviews, we discussed hermeneutical issues of understanding the cultural "other" (Schäfer 2002) while designing the guidelines for interviews and observation. The influence of cultural anthropology in our debates

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- 1 His only intent in qualitative, interview-based research appeared much later (Bourdieu et al. 1999, F: 1993, G: 1998). However, in that book he does not develop such a method either (see vol. 3).
 - 2 Bourdieu 1987, F: 1971a, G: 2011a; Bourdieu 1991, F: 1971b, G: 2011b.
 - 3 Similarly see Verter (2003, 150): "In order to see Bourdieu's relevance for sociologists of religion, one must—quite paradoxically—turn away from his writings of religion."
 - 4 The project was financed by the *Evangelisches Studienwerk Villigst* and the *World Council of Churches* who considered it useful to have a close up snapshot of the Pentecostal movement in Central America at the time of intense political conflict about US-American and Soviet geostrategic influence in that region. Originally, the institutional frame was a doctoral thesis in ecumenical theology at the University of Bochum with Prof. Konrad Raiser (see Schäfer 1992a). As time went by, the project turned sociological and methodological.

fitted very well with Bourdieu's background in that discipline. In consequence, our interview guideline provided ample space for the interviewees to talk about *their* experiences, *their* beliefs, and *their* modes of action. With this interview-guide as our key instrument, we started into two years of incredibly intense and in many ways very moving field studies on people deeply touched and mobilized by an environment of violence, disorder, and threat.

In my own research,⁵ the interviews (about 100 in each of the two countries) constituted the central interpretative axis, complemented by taped sermons (some 50 in each country), minutes of services for the analysis of church rituals (approx. 80), and of course a field diary. After these two years and our return to Germany, I began to analyze a sample of the interviews and sermons. In the light of the theory of habitus and from the analysis of the interviews, there emerged an analytical method with its focus on the semantics of ordinary religious language. I re-examined structuralist, hermeneutical, and pragmatist methods of analysis for their usefulness for my purpose. The most striking discovery, leading me back to my undergraduate days and propaedeutic courses in theology, was the organization of basic relations of Aristotelian logic in the model of the propositional square. The logic organized in this model, used since late antiquity in Western theology and philosophy, had already helped Augustine of Hippo to distinguish between the paradise, this world, and heaven.⁶ In the sixties, the model had been taken up again and transformed by Algirdas Julien Greimas for semiotics. While Greimas' square provided interesting stimuli for learning more about the semiotic application of conceptual logic, for my task it was focused too much on abstract semiotics, on the meaning of concepts understood merely as their value within the "universe of signification" (Greimas). They also lacked relation to the experience of the actors and to their social context. Instead, the model from classical antiquity—since it organizes propositions and not just concepts—offered better conditions for adaptation to praxeological sociology. Finally, it took me two years—and the complaints of friends and professors that I was spending the best years of my life in a den—to develop and test the central tool and method of HabitusAnalysis, the *praxeological square*, by analyzing interviews, evaluating field observations, computing data, interpreting gray literature and official documents, and writing some 600 pages

5 My wife employed other techniques for her study.

6 See Augustine's distinction between being able to not to sin (*posse non peccare*, man in paradise), not being able not to sin (*non posse non peccare*, unsaved man) etc.

on Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals in Guatemala—a piece that, due to adverse conditions, has not been published until the present day.⁷

The nascent method of HabitusAnalysis by the praxeological square represented an important advancement in the study of the Pentecostal movement in Latin America. In the literature about religious renewal in Latin America during the 1980s there was no internal differentiation within what was called “the Pentecostals.”⁸ In contrast, HabitusAnalysis brought to light that there was an extremely important difference, and even a division, within that religious movement. This difference was in line with the social difference between a certain cluster of believers in the lower class (rural and urban) and another cluster in the upper middle and upper classes. Under the conditions of war, this difference turned into open confrontation and controversial strategies. HabitusAnalysis evidenced that—in spite of a similar repertoire of religious symbols—along this line of conflict two completely different religious habitus had developed in a relatively short stretch of time. Upper middle class and upper class believers practiced a charismatic and theocratic religion of divine power (dominance, *Weltbeherrschung*, Max Weber), while the poor Pentecostals followed an apocalyptic, pre-millenarian religion of withdrawal from the world (*Weltflucht*, Max Weber). The former believed that their problems had originated from demons, active not only in personal threats (like alcoholism or bulimia) but also in social ones (like the guerrilla, the unionist movement, social democrats, and socialists). Their religious identity was based on the belief that the Holy Spirit had given power to the individual believer and to “Christian” institutions (like the military) to exorcize the demons. Exorcism, “spiritual warfare,” became the central practical operator. For their part, the poor Pentecostals faced military violence, hunger, the non-existence of schooling, and economic scarcity. They found themselves in a situation of “no way out” (*no hay para donde*) and understood their plight as a necessary consequence of the end times drawing near. In this situation, they waited for the imminent return of Christ and the rapture of the true believers into heaven. Their strategy was to withdraw from social and political commitment and to concentrate on preparing for the rapture exclusively by church attendance and solidarity among their congregations.⁹ The

7 Instead, a more general study of the historical and macro-sociological conditions of Protestant mission in Central America was accepted in 1992 as doctoral dissertation at Bochum University, Germany, under the supervision of Prof. Konrad Raiser.

8 See Domínguez and Huntington 1984; Stoll 1990; D. Martin 1990, for the most widespread publications in English. The same is true for publications in Spanish, e.g. Samandú 1991; A. Martínez 1989; Valverde 1990.

9 While the detailed study had not been published, a condensed version of it appeared in Spanish (Schäfer 1992b). In fact, there were at least three currents within the Pente-

difference between these factions was not only patently obvious to HabitusAnalysis but also to the actors themselves, who mutually ascribed to each other erroneous concepts of Pentecostalism.

As the distinction between two fractions in the movement was innovative in the sociological perception of Pentecostalism in Latin America, the differentiation between Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals became widespread among social scientists. Among the movement itself it was self-evident. Today, however, the distinction has become considerably blurred again because of the very social and religious developments of the last three decades.

For the validation of my empirical results and for frequent tests of the method it was very useful that, from 1995 to 2003, I held professorships in Costa Rica at the *Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana*, an ecumenical institution, and at the *Universidad Nacional*. The former especially provided me with many opportunities to validate the results and the method of my research together with Pentecostals all over Latin America, and to realize some additional small studies. The reactions to my work were striking. The empirical results were approved up to 100%, not only by students, but also by Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal scholars throughout Latin America. A book¹⁰ published in Costa Rica in 1992 was well received by students, scholars, and even religious practitioners in Latin America. When I used the method based on the praxeological square in seminars on the sociology of religion or research methods, students applied it in tentative analyses to their own churches. In the final evaluation of one of the seminars—with Pentecostals from the Central American region—, one of the students commented that he would like to apply the method to North Atlantic churches and even to academics.

The most interesting and fruitful scientific experience during the dialogue with my Latin American Pentecostal students and many experienced “servants of the Lord” was to look closely at that “infinitesimal but infinite distance” (Bourdieu) between the theoretical model of a given praxis and its practical mastery, a distance absolutely necessary to be aware of if one wants to generate a telling explanation of praxis.¹¹ In other words, my work with Pentecostals not only made me confident that the model worked, and that it worked as a *praxeological* model. More importantly, it gave me a strong experiential confirmation of the hermeneutical fact, which I

costals during the eighties.

10 Schäfer 1992c, based upon parts of my doctoral dissertation in theology.

11 “The theoretical model that makes it possible to recreate the whole universe of recorded practices, in so far as they are sociologically determined, is separated from what the agents master in the practical state, and of which its simplicity and power give a correct *idea*, by the infinitesimal but infinite distance that defines awareness or (it amounts to the same thing) explicit statement.” (Bourdieu 1990a, 270, G: 2008, 467)

already knew theoretically: the model is just a *model* and neither the practical mastery nor a mirror of reality—but as a model, it is very helpful. Thus, readers who expect too much of *HabitusAnalysis*—to be given something like a camera to take a faithful image of religious reality—are invited to feel disappointed right now. The model simply reduces the complexity of praxis: it helps to understand better how the practical logic of actors is transformed according to the challenges they meet in their social context.

Model and method are rooted in praxeological theory. In consequence, the empirical study and its methodological reflection triggered further work in theory. First, I dealt with the problem of collective mobilization of social and religious movements by developing a theory of identity and strategy as a network of dispositions based upon the concept of *habitus*.¹² Second, I developed an outline of a praxeological approach to theology and to religious studies.¹³

Moving from theory back to method and empirical studies, I had the chance since 2006, through a professorship of Sociology of Religion and Theology at Bielefeld University,¹⁴ to design bigger research projects with considerable third party funding and a research team. While almost all our research projects have followed a praxeological approach, I shall here mention only those of my co-authors of the third volume of *HabitusAnalysis*. The first project relevant for the advancement of the method was focused on religious peace builders in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The field study was carried out in cooperation with the Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies at the University of Sarajevo. We studied religious groups and institutions of Abrahamic religions engaged in peace building. The idea was to cluster the groups in a model of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian religious field and, in a second step, to compare the *habitus* of the actors in order to find specific similarities and differences. Leif Seibert (religious studies, philosophy, and sociology) developed a scaled model of the religious field and, together with Zrinka Štimac, conducted 90 *habitus*-interviews.¹⁵ In the context of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research

12 The book was accepted as doctoral dissertation in sociology by two of the most long-standing Bourdieu experts in Germany, Hans-Peter Müller and Klaus Eder. Presently a thoroughly revised version is being prepared for publication. See Schäfer 2003; Schäfer 2005.

13 This book was accepted as Habilitation in ecumenical theology at Bochum University, Germany, also under the supervision of Prof. Konrad Raiser (Schäfer 2004a).

14 For more information on the team and the projects, see the website of the Center for the Interdisciplinary Research on Religion and Society (CIRRuS), <http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/religionsforschung> or google: 'cirrus uni bielefeld'.

15 Leif Seibert finalized the project with a prize winning doctoral dissertation in which he developed a fully-fledged model of the religious field and considerably advanced

at Bielefeld University, together with Adrián Tovar Simoncic (cultural anthropology, religious studies, and sociology) we then achieved a deeper understanding of identity politics within the theoretical framework of the field-concept.¹⁶ Further, with an empirical study on religious diversity in Mexico City, which was realized in cooperation with the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (UNAM, Hugo José Suárez), Adrián contributed a praxeological perspective on religion as a means of individuation in modernity as well as progress in field theory. Since late 2011, Adrián and Tobias Reu (PhD, NYU, in social anthropology), have been realizing a research project on religious actors and their socio-political strategies in Guatemala and Nicaragua. This project is designed to test the whole range of methods and models in just one field of research in order to provide a coherent presentation of the method in volume 3 of *HabitusAnalysis*. One of the models is the social space of religious styles. It had been tested before by Jens Köhrsen (economics and sociology) in a research project about religious taste and social stratification in Buenos Aires.¹⁷ Adrián and Jens have now co-authored the chapter on social space in volume 3. The scholars mentioned here have contributed directly to the publication of *HabitusAnalysis*.

Beyond the co-authors of volume 3, there are some more scholars in our research team who realize projects based upon praxeological sociology and who have contributed good ideas to the common task. Clara Buitrago (social anthropology) studies religious beliefs and modes of organization in the transnational praxis of migrants between Guatemala and the USA. Tamara Candela (Mesoamerican studies) studies life histories of religious peace builders in Guatemala. Sebastian Schlerka (sociology) works on “secularization as struggle.” Jacobo Tancara (theology and literature) studies the constitution of subjectivity in Bolivian marginal urban writing in comparison with Liberation Theology. Rory Tews (sociology) applies *HabitusAnalysis* to social entrepreneurs in the economic field in Germany.

For the solution of intricate problems in our statistical “background activities”—sampling for surveys in difficult places like Bosnia-Herzegovina, construction of scales, reliable factor analyses etc.—we count on the advice and services of the StatBeCe (Statistisches Beratungs Centrum, Bielefeld University, Prof. Dr. Kauer-

HabitusAnalysis. Leif is not only the author of the chapter on the religious field and contributor to the chapter on the analysis of the practical sense (both vol. 3). He also accompanied critically the work on the volumes 1 and 2.

16 “E pluribus unum?— Ethnic Identities in Transnational Integration Processes in the Americas,” a research group at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research at Bielefeld University.

17 The project was finished in co-tutelle with École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, with a *summa cum laude* doctoral dissertation.

mann), the statistician Kurt Salentin of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence, and Constantin Klein of the psychology branch of our Center for the Interdisciplinary Research on Religion and Society (CIRRuS). The surveys in Guatemala and Nicaragua relied on the expertise of Gustavo Herrarte and Irina Pérez Zeledón. The Center for Interamerican Studies (CIAS) at Bielefeld University in Bielefeld presents an interesting institutional frame for discussing praxeological takes on transnational religious and cultural relations. Moreover, our model of the social space with its simplified scales for economic and cultural capital has been used since 2009 in a project on spirituality lead by my colleague Prof. Heinz Streib (Streib and Hood 2013; Streib 2014). In the faculty of History, Philosophy, and Sociology, also Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey and Thomas Welskopp as historians with a sound knowledge of Bourdieu's work are challenging interlocutors. Additionally, during the last years we had the opportunity to engage in more or less intensive exchanges about our ideas with outstanding experts in praxeological social research and neighboring disciplines, like e.g. our colleagues Thomas Alkemeyer, Ullrich Bauer, Uwe Bittlingmayer, Jörg Blasius, Helmut Bremer, Andrea Lange-Vester, Otto Maduro, Ulrich Oevermann, Terry Rey, Ole Riis, Franz Schultheis, Hugo José Suárez, Michael Vester and Loic Wacquant. Many thanks to all of them for their kind attention and advice! We hope that our three volumes will be conducive to further exchanges in the future.

At the start of this publication project, I had in mind just one book on method, with much of it already written. The project has however tripled in volume for a variety of reasons. The first reason is critics. Over the last 10 years or so, we have presented the method at conferences, where it was well received and discussed. Taking both the constructive critiques *and* the misunderstandings seriously, the only consequence—other than keeping silent—is to write more, and explain better. Second, the *Lichtenberg Kolleg* in Göttingen, together with the German Research Foundation (DFG), gave me 10 months time in 2012 to work exclusively on the epistemological and theoretical foundation of the method. So I wrote more and, hopefully, explained better. Finally, in the research team we took the decision to change our plans with regard to the volume on method (vol. 3). Initially, the different components of HabitusAnalysis were described according to the empirical context they had been developed in: the qualitative analysis of the practical sense with data from Guatemala in the eighties; the model of the religious field with data from Bosnia-Herzegovina 2009; and the model of the social space of religious styles with reference to Argentina 2010. As our recent project in Guatemala and Nicaragua was proceeding and involved all three techniques of HabitusAnalysis, we decided to take our time and to rewrite the whole book based upon the new and consistent set of data from the this project in Central America. Max Weber once

said that politics was a slow drilling of hard boards, with passion and perspective. *HabitusAnalysis* seems to be similar.

During the years we spent working on this project, there were many people providing technical support, good advice, and amicable gestures. Beyond the people already mentioned, I would like to name—in the order of appearance, so to say—Axel Stockmeier, Elena Rambaks, Stephanie Zantvoort, Hannah Schulz, Anna-Lena Friebe, and Nora Schrimpf for technical support during the years of work on this project. A special mention I would like to make of Sebastian Schlerka, who accompanied the last year with extremely competent technical support and who read through the text more than once with a keen eye not only on style but also on content. Teresa Castro and Michael Pätzold corrected our English with great skill.¹⁸ For any kind of flaws a reader may find, only the author can be held responsible.

Finally yet importantly, we thank the German Research Foundation, the Stockmeier Foundation, the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, Mexico, the Center for Interdisciplinary Research at Bielefeld University, and the presidency of the Bielefeld University for financial support of the diverse endeavors that contributed to our praxeological reflections on epistemology and language.

18 If there are some flaws left in style or semantics, this has to be due to my interpolating some sentences after finishing the English copy-editing.

HabitusAnalysis 1

Epistemology and Language

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