

M A R C I N S E R A F I N

*Cacophony of Contestation:
Forms of Voice and the Warsaw Taxi Market
as a Field of Struggles*

Abstract

This article analyses the political struggles in and around the Warsaw taxi market. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social fields and incorporating Albert Hirschman's metaphor of political action as voice, I capture the position-taking of members of the taxi field, highlighting the different levels of involvement in the struggles. By distinguishing between different forms of voice—murmuring, jeering, whispering, hissing, grunting, and shouting—I show that the struggles that shape the Warsaw taxi market take the form of struggles over classifications and struggles over opportunities for exchange. I describe how market institutions are established and contested within the political field; enforced and contested within the bureaucratic field; and interpreted and contested within the juridical field. I thus contribute a field theory that investigates the links between fields and especially between economic fields and the state. This article draws on fieldwork conducted in Warsaw between November 2012 and June 2013.

Keywords: Bourdieu; Classification; Hirschman; Taxi market; Theory of social fields; Political action; Warsaw.

“Voice is political action par excellence.”

Albert Hirschman

Exit, Voice and Loyalty

“Once a sociological reasoning has started to relate structures of objects or functioning, in other words to spin a metaphor as a comparative conceptualization, *it must be spun out to the end*. By extending its descriptive questioning to a longer series of phenomena and a greater number of aspects of these phenomena, any comparative reasoning works to increase empirical control of its conceptual shifts, in other words its chances of revealing both the *appropriateness* and the *inappropriateness* of an analogy.”

Jean-Claude Passeron

*Sociological Reasoning: A Non-Popperian
Space of Argumentation* (emphasis in original)

259

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THERE IS A LONG TRADITION in the social sciences of looking at markets as political phenomena. What many economic sociologists and political economists have been able to show is that, in contrast to the position taken by neoclassical economics, markets are not only places where goods and services are allocated and exchanged but also, as Pierre Bourdieu put it, both *fields of forces* and *fields of struggles* [Bourdieu 2005: 193–205].

At certain moments, the political foundations of specific markets become more visible. Recently we have witnessed such moments in taxi markets around the world. During the past few years taxi drivers in various cities have struggled over their working conditions and against the rise of Uber. And while this recent wave of protests is not the first time taxi drivers have taken to the streets [see, for example, Georgano 1972; Hodges 2007; Mathew 2008; Sik 1994], it has been the most global. Multiple protests have been held in London, Paris, Madrid, Berlin, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Prague, Toronto, Rio de Janeiro, Hong Kong, Sydney, Warsaw, Budapest and many other cities across the globe.

In this article I take up the case of struggles that have been taking place in a single taxi market—the Warsaw taxi market—to return to the idea of markets as political arenas. I build on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who theorized markets as fields of struggles, by incorporating and developing Albert Hirschman’s metaphor of political action as voice. I show how members of the Warsaw taxi field have engaged in different types of struggles by developing a distinction between *different forms of voice*.

I show that, if one listens more carefully, it turns out that the voices of Warsaw taxi drivers can be heard throughout the city not only during protests every few years but on an everyday basis. At taxi stands, on the streets, in their taxis, in state institutions, in courts, in households and in the media, taxi drivers are participating in various forms of contestation. Some of their voices are loud and clear, sending a strong message of dissatisfaction to a large audience; others are vague and soft with only a few people hearing and making sense of what is being said. The voices have different pitches and are aimed at different audiences. Simply aggregated they create a cacophony of contestation, a noise that is difficult to understand or make sense of. Warsaw taxi drivers sound less like a harmonious church choir and more like a noisy bazaar. In order to make sense of this cacophony, to capture the struggles that exist both within and around the Warsaw taxi market, it is helpful to separate the different

voices, distinguishing the loud ones from the quiet, the clear from the incomprehensible.

The article has the following structure. In the first part, I discuss Bourdieu's field theory and Albert Hirschman's theory of voice. I introduce the distinction between different forms of voice and show how it allows us to better theorize the struggles in and around the Warsaw taxi market. I go on to discuss the data that, through a process of abductive reasoning, led me to the typology of different forms of voice. I then describe the struggles that have taken place in and around the Warsaw taxi market using the concepts introduced in the theoretical section. Finally, in the conclusion I discuss how the typology of different forms of voice can be applied beyond the Warsaw taxi market and its theoretical significance for field theory.

From fields of struggles to different forms of voice

My theoretical argument about the struggles in and around the Warsaw taxi market builds on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social fields. It does so by incorporating Albert Hirschman's metaphor of political action as voice and distinguishing between different forms of voice.

Developed across different sciences, field theory was introduced into sociology and popularized by Pierre Bourdieu [Hilgers and Mangez 2015; Martin 2003]. Like most sociological theory—for example, ecological theory, systems theory, theory of social worlds—Bourdieu's theory of social fields is one of social differentiation [Lahire 2015]. Drawing on the work of Durkheim, Weber and Marx, Bourdieu argued that social differentiation leads to the development of semi-autonomous social microcosms (*fields*). Each field has its own logic or constitution (*nomos*), history (*genesis*), its own stakes and resources (*capitals*), and embodied beliefs (*illusio*).

Bourdieu used the notion of field to investigate different social spaces (legal, economic, political, scientific and so on).¹ In each case the goal was to describe the structural history of individual spaces, capturing their relative autonomy and logic, while at the same time

¹ These spaces include the religious field [Bourdieu 1991b], the academic field [Bourdieu 1988], the political field [Bourdieu 1991c, Wacquant 2005], the juridical field [Bourdieu 1986b], the literary field [Bourdieu 1996a], the field of higher education [Bourdieu 1996b], the

journalistic field [Benson and Neveu 2005; Bourdieu 1998], the field of publishing houses [Bourdieu 2008], the philosophical field [Bourdieu 1991a], the bureaucratic field [Bourdieu 1994], and the French housing market [Bourdieu 2005].

trying to develop certain general properties that would exist across different areas of social life [Bourdieu 1985a]. As Bourdieu put it in *The Rules of Art*:

To analyse the different fields (religious field, scientific field, etc.) in the different configurations in which they may appear according to the era and to national traditions, treating each of them as a *particular case* in the true sense, that is, as a case which figures among other possible configurations, is to give the comparative method its full effectiveness. By this route, it is possible to gain an understanding of each case in its most concrete singularity without falling back complacently on an ideographic description (of a determined state of a determined field); and to try to grasp, in the very same process, the invariant properties of all fields and the specific form taken by the general mechanism in each field, as well as the system of concepts—capital, investments, interest etc. —utilized to describe them [1996: 183, emphasis in original].

Together with the notion of *habitus* and *capital*, the notion of *field* became the central theoretical concept for Bourdieu and has since been picked up by a large number of scholars [for example, Beckert 2009, 2010; Benson and Neveu 2005; Boyer 2008; Couldry 2003; Emirbayer and Johnson 2008; Fligstein 2001, 2002; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Gorski 2013; Green 2013; Hilgers and Mangez 2015; Leschziner 2015; Martin 2003, 2011].

At the centre of Bourdieu's approach to social differentiation is conflict. Social fields, according to Bourdieu's theory, are not only fields of forces but also fields of struggles [for example, Lahire 2015: 66-67; Martin 2011: 291-293]. As Bourdieu wrote in "Some Properties of Fields": "we know that in every field we shall find a struggle, the specific forms of which have to be looked for each time, between the newcomer who tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out competition" [Bourdieu 1993a: 72]. More than 20 years later, in his discussion of the notion of the economic field, Bourdieu very similarly wrote that "[the] field of forces is also a field of struggles, a socially constructed field of action in which agents equipped with different resources confront each other in order to gain access to exchange and to preserve or transform the currently prevailing relation of force" [Bourdieu 2005: 199; see also Fligstein 1996].

And it is this idea of economic fields as fields of struggles that will be developed in this article. I argue that in order to better theorize struggles that shape economic fields it is useful to build on Albert Hirschman's distinction between "exit" and "voice" and look at the different ways in which economic actors exercise voice. Albert Hirschman argued that in any situation that people find

unsatisfactory they can act in two ways: they can exit or they can exercise voice. He criticised economists for focusing on exit and neglecting voice, thereby taking the political out of political economy. In *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, in which Hirschman introduced the distinction between exit and voice, he defined voice as:

[A]ny attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs, whether individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of forcing a change in management, or through various types of actions and protests, including those that are meant to mobilize public opinion [Hirschman 1970: 30].

Hirschman returned to the notion of voice throughout his career, taking into consideration the critical comments of others [Hirschman 1981, 1992],² including Bourdieu [Bourdieu 1986a; Hirschman 1976: 388; Hirschman 1992: 84].³

Like Bourdieu's concept of a social field, the distinction between exit and voice was used to understand phenomena across different domains of social life: trade unions, public services, migration, school choice, urban life, political parties, divorce and adolescent development [Dowding *et al.* 2000; Hirschman 1981: 209-266; Hirschman 1992: 77-101; Hirschman 1993].⁴ Like the notion of field, the distinction between voice and exit brought out in each case, at the same time, certain general mechanisms related to social life but also the specificity of the different social contexts to which this distinction was applied.

Bourdieu's theory of social fields can be retranslated using Hirschman's concepts of exit, voice and loyalty. At the risk of simplification, what Bourdieu was arguing was that one of the fundamental characteristics of social differentiation is that different fields are able to produce and are reproduced by a sense of loyalty among the people who belong to them. This loyalty Bourdieu called *illusio* or, drawing on

² In *Rival Views of Market Society* voice was defined as "the attempt at repairing and perhaps improving [...] through an effort at communicating one's complaints, grievances and proposals for improvement" [Hirschman 1992: 77]. In *Exit, Voice and the Fate of the German Republic* voice was defined as "the act of complaining or of organizing to complain or to protest, with the intent of achieving directly a recuperation of the quality that has been impaired" [Hirschman 1993: 176].

³ Pierre Bourdieu and Albert Hirschman were long-time acquaintances and intellectual partners [Adelman 2013: 494; Bourdieu 1986b; Hirschman 1997: XXVI]. Both Bourdieu and

Hirschman were at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton in the 1970s. In the 1980s Bourdieu invited Hirschman to deliver a series of keynote lectures at the Collège de France. It was there that Hirschman presented "The Concept of Interest: From Euphemisms to Tautology" [1986: 35-55]. In 1988 Bourdieu addressed the same subject in a lecture entitled "Is a Disinterested Act Possible?" [1998: 75-92].

⁴ And just as the notion of field has been used to understand Bourdieu's biography [Bourdieu 2007: 4], the distinction between exit and voice has been used to understand Hirschman's biography [Adelman 2013: 2].

psychoanalytical language, *libido* [Bourdieu 2000: 164-167]. Because members of fields share loyalty towards the field—a belief that the game “is worth the candle” [Bourdieu 1998: 77]—even those who are dominated engage in voice rather than exit: struggle to improve their position rather than simply leave the social field.

In this article I combine Bourdieu’s field theory with Hirschman’s notion of political action as voice in order to capture the contestation in and around the Warsaw taxi market. I develop Hirschman’s voice metaphor by distinguishing between *different forms of voice*. These different forms of voice I call *murmuring*, *jeering*, *whispering*, *grunting* and *shouting*. By providing a definition for each, I transform what might at first seem to be purely metaphorical language into a network of clearly defined sociological concepts.⁵ The distinction between different forms of voice is a *sociological* typology because the focus of analysis is put on the *relation* between speakers (actors engaging in contestation), a way of speaking (the logic of contestation) and an audience that may or may not be listening (location of contestation in physical and social space).

To foreshadow the empirical analysis that follows, I summarize the argument of this paper in Table 1. I shall argue that incorporating different forms of voice into field theory allows us to capture the *position-taking* of members of the Warsaw taxi field as they engage in different forms of contestation. Using the typology, I provide an analytical description of the Warsaw taxi market showing that struggles structuring the taxi market have different logics; take place in different locations; are directed at different audiences; engage different members of the taxi field; and require different level of engagement and sets of skills. I show that struggles that have been shaping the Warsaw taxi market have taken place both within the taxi field (murmuring and jeering) and outside of it: in the political field (whispering), the bureaucratic field (hissing), the juridical field (grunting) and the larger social space (murmuring, jeering, shouting).

Data and method

My research on the Warsaw taxi market drew on multiple methods and different sources: qualitative interviews, participant observation, newspaper articles, internet forums for taxi drivers, official trade

⁵ On the use of analogies in theorizing see Abbott 2004: 114-118; Passeron 2012: 271-281; Swedberg 2014: 80-98.

TABLE 1
Summary of the cacophony of contestation in and around the Warsaw taxi market

Forms of voice	Definition	Location in social space	Location in physical space	Audience	Members of the taxi field involved	Frequency	Level of <i>illusio</i>
Murmuring	Engaging in the everyday exchange of opinions, concerns and criticisms	Taxi field, general social space	Taxi stands, taxis, households, internet forums	Members of the field, customers, journalists, family	All	Very high	Low
Jeering	Engaging in everyday conflicts over classifications and opportunities of exchange	Taxi field, general social space	Taxi stands, taxis, internet forums	Other members of the field, journalists, general public	Many	High	Low
Whispering	Attempting to influence the construction of law through behind the scenes negotiations with the lawmakers	Political field	Political offices, state committees	Politicians	Few	Medium	High

(Continued)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Forms of voice	Definition	Location in social space	Location in physical space	Audience	Members of the taxi field involved	Frequency	Level of <i>illusio</i>
Hissing	Attempting to influence the execution of the law by directly pressuring state officials	Bureaucratic field	State administration	Bureaucrats	Few	Medium	High
Grunting	Attempting to influence the interpretation of law by engaging directly or indirectly in legal struggles	Juridical field	Courts	Judges	Few	Low	High
Shouting	Expressing strong objections to policy or courses of action in a public demonstration	General social space	Streets	Politicians, general public	Some	Low	Medium (participant)/ High (organizer)

union documents, court case documentation, videos and photos of collective action and an online and paper survey conducted among licenced taxi drivers.

To understand the recent history of the Warsaw taxi market I read all the articles written since 1989 in Warsaw's three main newspapers (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Życie Warszawy*, *Rzeczpospolita*) that had the word "taxi driver" in them. I also gained background knowledge about contemporary Warsaw taxi drivers by following the city's five most important taxi internet forums, the biggest of which has more than 1,200 accounts. Internet forums are important places for the exchange of information. Before starting my fieldwork I read these forums on a day-to-day basis and continued to read them through my fieldwork and after. This provided me with background knowledge that was used subsequently during interviews and later helped me to interpret those interviews. Forums allowed me to identify the key actors in the taxi field. They were a good source of information on the political struggles of taxi drivers, because it was here that much of the collective action was planned, coordinated and recollected. Forums provided access to video footage and pictures of the protests that were held in previous years. Moreover, participation in the forums facilitated entry into the world of taxi drivers as I used them to look for interviewees and survey respondents.

The fieldwork was conducted primarily between November 2012 and June 2013. This was before the introduction of Uber in Warsaw, but at the time of the launch of the first smart-phone taxi firms (iTaxi and mytaxi), which were shaking up the taxi industry by introducing a new type of taxi firm without a dispatch centre. The fieldwork consisted of observation of taxi stands and within taxis; 23 semi-structured interviews with taxi drivers, their family members, a business owner, a dispatcher, trade union leaders and regulators; informal conversations with taxi drivers; and a non-representative online and paper survey of 246 licenced taxi drivers (from a total of approximately 10,000 licenced drivers).

GENESIS and structure of the Warsaw taxi field

While the origins of the Warsaw taxi field date back to the 19th century and the emergence of horse-drawn cabs [Kotańska 1996; Milewski 2013], the structures of the contemporary taxi field emerged

during the post-socialist transformation that took place in Poland in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In December 1988, six months before the victory of Solidarity and the fall of the socialist regime in Poland, the Law on Economic Activity was passed. The law transformed the Polish state-run economy, reorganizing the Warsaw taxi market in the process, and releasing a wave of private entrepreneurship. In order to become a taxi driver, individuals no longer had to apply for a concession; they could now have other sources of income; and they did not have to join an association of taxi drivers.

The law also enabled the emergence of private taxi firms. As the democratic state opened up access to radio frequencies, previously controlled by the authoritarian regime, taxi firms became more important. A taxi business model emerged based on taxi drivers owning their own cars and paying the taxi firm to receive fares from a dispatch centre. In the late 1990s taxi firms gained importance as mobile phones became more popular: people ordered taxis over the phone rather than going to taxi stands.

For the taxi market, as for the Polish economy as a whole, the post-socialist transformation involved a shift from an economy of shortage to an economy of surplus [see Kornai 2013]. The number of taxis in Warsaw increased from 4,230 in 1977 to 10,024 in 1998. This rise transformed the temporal order of the taxi market. Whereas before 1989 it was customers who were usually waiting at taxi stands for a taxi, after 1989 it was rather taxi drivers who were waiting for customers due to surplus supply. Soon a Polanyi-like counter movement emerged as taxi drivers began to protest over the excessive number of drivers, long waiting times and lack of income. The city gradually re-regulated the taxi market, first introducing certificates in 1991, then concessions in 1998 and finally licences in 2001, only to deregulate it again a few years later.

An important event in the recent structural history of the Warsaw taxi market was the passing of the Road Transport Act in 2001. The act regulated different forms of transport and introduced licences for taxi drivers. In order to receive a licence a taxi driver had to pass an exam to prove his or her knowledge of the city. Having passed the exam the driver would have to wait for a licence because the number of licences was limited by the Warsaw municipality. But having created a moat that would make entry into the taxi field difficult, the law left a drawbridge that helped people circumvent the regulation and enter the taxi field without a licence. The law introduced the service of "*okazjonalny przewóz*" (occasional transport) but there was no clear definition of what the service of occasional transport consisted

or of how it differed from that of taxis. This allowed both taxi firms and individuals to circumvent the licence system, bringing unlicensed drivers into the taxi field. Some taxi firms centred their business model on non-licensed drivers; some used it to grow by bringing together both licensed and non-licensed drivers. Many of the struggles that have taken place over the past 15 years have been related to changing, enforcing or reinterpreting this law.

The contemporary Warsaw taxi field is populated by collective actors (taxi firms, trade unions, social movements) and individual actors (taxi drivers, managers of taxi firms⁶). The different members of the Warsaw taxi field “are competing for access to exchange and to preserve or transform the currently prevailing relation of force” [Bourdieu 2005: 199]. Unlike many other taxi markets around the world (for example, New York or London), the Warsaw taxi market is not a standard market, but a status market with more expensive and cheaper taxi firms [Aspers 2011]. It is also a two-sided market [Rochet and Tirole 2003; Rysman 2009]: taxi firms compete both for taxi drivers and for taxi customers. Firms compete for taxi drivers by attracting corporate clients and by monopolizing the more popular taxi stands (near the airport, train station, hotels and shopping malls). They compete for taxi customers by price and quality of service. Taxi drivers compete both to be able to belong to taxi firms and for clients. And just as there is a status order among taxi firms, there is a similar status order among taxi drivers. First, there is a hierarchy between licensed drivers, who have passed the exam, and non-licensed drivers, who have not. Second, there is a hierarchy between drivers depending on the car they own. With a “better” (newer, more expensive) car and a taxi licence a taxi driver is able to drive for firms that charge clients more (2.2-2.4 zł/km). With a less expensive car (older, without air-conditioning), a taxi driver can only join a cheaper taxi firm (1.4-1.8 zł/km).⁷

The Warsaw taxi field is a field of forces, but also a field of struggles. These struggles include struggles over classifications and struggles for opportunities of exchange. The struggles most visible to the general public have been protests and strikes. Over the past 25 years taxi drivers have taken to the streets of Warsaw to voice their concerns and fight for better working conditions and a higher income.

⁶ While taxi dispatchers are part of taxi drivers’ social world, as the notion was used by Anselm Strauss and Howard Becker, they are not part of the social field [see Lahire 2012].

⁷ Social capital can sometimes make up for the lack of technological capital. If a taxi driver knows the managers at one of the “better” taxi firms, this can help him or her to join that firm with a car that would otherwise not be permitted.

However, protests and strikes represent only the front stage of political action and much of the struggle has taken place “backstage.” Struggles of this kind are not experienced by members of the general public—who are affected by strikes while stuck in traffic or trying unsuccessfully to get a cab—nor have they been discussed by the media. Many members of the taxi field might not even be aware that such struggles have been taking place.

In other words, the voices of taxi drivers can be heard throughout the city of Warsaw not only every few years, when taxi drivers take to the streets to voice their concerns, but rather on an everyday basis. In order to make sense of the different struggles in and around the Warsaw taxi market, we need to push Albert Hirschman’s notion of voice further and distinguish between murmuring, jeering, whispering, grunting and shouting.

Murmuring and jeering at taxi stands, in taxis and at home

To understand the struggles in and around the Warsaw taxi market it is necessary to look beyond protests and strikes. We need to take into account the micro-politics of the everyday. This means including those forms of contestation that can be heard every day at taxi stands, in taxis, in households and on internet forums as taxi drivers discuss their working conditions and engage in everyday conflicts with others. Such everyday forms of contestation I will call *murmuring* and *jeering*.

“Murmuring of the people,” wrote Albert Hirschman “[is] the utterance and exchange of opinion, concern, and criticism *among* citizens” [Hirschman 1992: 82, emphasis in original]. Taxi drivers murmur while waiting for passengers, when driving with passengers and after work when talking to members of their family and their friends about their work.

Murmurs can be heard at taxi stands. Like many taxi drivers around the world, Warsaw taxi drivers spend much of their time waiting for customers. Some of this time is spent talking to other drivers at taxi stands or over the phone (taxi drivers from the same firm can call each other for free). Taxi drivers complain to each other about the long working day, their problems with passengers, other taxi drivers, inefficient trade unions, lack of income, taxi firms, car breakdowns and family troubles that are work-related. Such exchanges of opinion, concerns and criticism can also be heard on “virtual taxi stands”; that is to say, Facebook and internet forums created by and for taxi drivers.

Murmuring can also be heard in the conversations that taxi drivers have with their customers. While some interactions between taxi drivers and their fares are “silent,” with neither the passenger nor the taxi driver saying anything—besides the passenger giving the address at the beginning of the trip and the taxi driver asking for the fare at the end—journeys sometimes involve a conversation between taxi drivers and their fares. This conversation might be a form of small talk but it also might be of more serious nature. Passengers sometimes use taxi drivers as a substitute for a therapist or a priest, telling taxi drivers about their problems. At the same time, taxi drivers tell passengers about their lives, long working hours, lack of income and family problems. Even among those taxi drivers who avoid starting a conversation, a simple question such as “do you like your job?” “how long have you been driving?” or more confrontationally “why are taxis so expensive?” or “why are taxi drivers often cheats?” is likely to engage the taxi driver in a conversation about his or her work. Such exchanges of opinion can also be heard in households as taxi drivers return from work and talk to family members about their job.

On an everyday basis voices of taxi drivers can also be heard as taxi drivers struggle with other taxi drivers. Such everyday conflicts of short duration between members of the taxi field—usually verbal, rarely physical—I call *jeering*.

Often, everyday struggles between taxi drivers involve members of the taxi field classifying and being classified by other members of the taxi field. Consider the excerpt from an interview that I conducted with one taxi driver:⁸

Jan: Have you driven with Green Car [a taxi firm]?

Me: I talked with a taxi driver from that firm.

Jan: There are no taxi drivers there! That is the first mistake! Taxi drivers work for companies like Ele, Sawa, Super, Volfra [names of taxi firms]. There you have taxi drivers who have to earn money. There [at Green Car] you have *drivers* who do not have to.⁹

In the Warsaw taxi market such symbolic struggles over classification usually take place between licensed taxi drivers and non-licensed drivers. Non-licensed drivers have been classified by licenced drivers as

⁸ All interviews were conducted in Polish, translations are mine.

⁹ At the time Green Car was a new company. It had a different business model

than most in that it gave drivers cars to drive and paid them by the hour. In all other taxi firms taxi drivers pay to be able to receive fares.

“transporters” (*przewoźnicy*). But they are also classified in terms of moral categories such as “thieves,” “shit-eaters” or “parasites.” On the other hand, non-licensed drivers have classified licensed drivers as “*cierp*” (sufferers) or “*złotówka*” (derogatory term from the Polish currency, the *złoty*). And classification struggles also take place between different groups of licensed drivers. Classification struggles take place between taxi drivers who drive for cheaper firms and those who drive for more expensive ones. In conversations and on taxi forums, some taxi drivers from the more expensive firms have accused those from cheaper ones of “ruining the market,” implying that the drivers from the cheaper firms are not in fact cheaper because they cheat passengers and overcharge them by manipulating their taxi meters.

These symbolic struggles over categories and classifications involve actors who are not members of the taxi field. Journalists—who have the symbolic power to shape the way we think and speak about the social world [Couldry 2003]—have been involved in these struggles over symbolic boundaries. As I was told by labour union leaders, journalists have repeatedly been told by licensed taxi drivers not to use expressions like “non-licensed taxi driver” but rather to refer to non-licensed drivers as “transporters” or simply “drivers.”

The everyday struggles between taxi drivers include struggles over classification, but also struggles over opportunities for exchange.

The main struggle over opportunities of exchange has been the one over taxi licences; in other words, over barriers of entry into the field. The other struggle over opportunities for exchange in the Warsaw taxi market has involved fighting for access to taxi stands. In taxi markets, taxi stands have historically been one of the central “uncertainty reducing institutions” [Bourdieu 2005: 196; see also Kregel 1980]. In Warsaw, for much of the 20th century, taxi stands were the only locations where taxi drivers and passengers were able to find each other. With the rise of modern communications, which in Warsaw took place in the 1990s, taxi stands lost some of their power. Nevertheless, they continue to play an important role in the taxi market. Much of the struggle between taxi firms takes the form of contention over popular taxi stands (*wybiraki*) located in certain parts of the city (near clubs, airports, hotels, train stations, shopping malls). Some taxi stands are monopolized legally, when a taxi firm wins a tender for the taxi stand near the airport or a central station, thus acquiring the legal right to monopolize it. Other taxi stands are monopolized illegally when a taxi firm buys the “right” to a stand from a club, even though the space in

fact belongs to the city municipality, or when a group of drivers takes over a taxi stand and prevents others from using it.

While such monopolization of taxi stands is to a large extent institutionalized, it is reproduced in everyday interactions. When a driver from one firm arrives or stands near a rank monopolized by another group of drivers or a taxi firm he or she is “reminded”—sometimes politely, but often not—not to stand there. Newcomers into the field quickly learn where they are able to stand and which taxi stands they should avoid.

Looking at murmuring and jeering is important because other forms of political action cannot be understood without these everyday forms of contestation. It is through such everyday forms of contestation that members of the taxi field position themselves in relation to other members. And, as I will later argue, it is through such forms of “horizontal voice” that collective identities are established or destroyed, thus enabling or hindering other forms of “vertical voice” of collective protests [O’Donnell 1986].

Whispering in political offices and state committees

Less frequently than murmuring and jeering, the voices of a small group of actors can be heard as they try to change the existing market regulations through behind the scenes negotiations with politicians. I capture this form of contestation with the notion of *whisper*. One should distinguish murmuring from whispering. Whispering, like murmuring, is a quiet form of voice with a limited audience but, unlike murmuring, whispering has a clear message, sometimes directed strategically so that others cannot hear what is being said. Whispers can be effective, they can be heard, but only if the person whispering has the ear of the listener. What else is lobbying if not whispering into the ear of the people in power?

The struggles over regulation of the taxi market have taken place at different locations from the everyday struggles. These locations have been political offices, committee meetings and informal meetings where the rules that regulate the taxi market have been written and rewritten. This includes both central and local government, parliamentary committees on transportation, and municipality meetings and assemblies. Members of the taxi field have been contesting regulation on matters such as the limit on the number of taxis in Warsaw, the price of the service, and certain advantages such as the possibility of using bus lanes.

Only a small fraction of taxi drivers who engage in murmuring and jeering participate in whispering. Those participating in whispering have been much more committed to contestation than other actors in the taxi field. Those who engage in behind the scenes negotiations over regulation have usually been those who have symbolic power; that is to say, who have been recognized by the state as a *spokesperson* for a group who represents their collective interests. Those actors are primarily trade union leaders and managers of taxi associations.

For those few taxi drivers engaged in whispering, having their whispers heard has not been easy. Getting the attention of the audience—"the ear" of the people in power—is a necessary condition for whispering to be heard. To obtain this attention, it helps to have either the right networks (social capital) or money (economic capital). Networks help to get the attention of the rule makers, to obtain access to them. Money allows the hiring of lobbyists. Such "professional whisperers" know who and when to call, how to push legislation through parliament or stop it from passing; they have the right networks and a particular set of skills. However, with weak trade unions, Warsaw taxi drivers have been unable to hire such professionals to do their whispering for them. Very few licenced taxi drivers participate in trade unions and pay union fees. Even at the height of struggles over regulation in 2009-2012, when those in charge of the largest trade union were actively recruiting new drivers, fewer than 200 drivers (approximately 2.5% of all licenced taxi drivers) were paying members (10 zł monthly fee or approximately 2 euros), leaving the union with a monthly budget below 400 euros. That was not sufficient to enable someone to forgo their work as a taxi driver and focus on lobbying. The low rates of membership have meant that unions, in order to organize strikes or hire lawyers, have had to rely on money received from taxi firms.

In order to lobby successfully, some of the more engaged licenced taxi drivers have tried to institutionalize a spokesperson, who would represent their interests in the political field. In both local and national elections individuals ran for office as representatives of taxi drivers. In almost all cases they were not elected, in part because taxi drivers are not a large enough social group, but also because, as the discussions on the taxi forum and taxi stands make clear, drivers' political views differ substantially. Their political differences make it very difficult for a large enough group of taxi drivers to gather around a candidate from a political party. However, in 2006, Roman Krakowski, a licenced taxi driver, was elected to the district council

of Warsaw. Even though he was elected without the support of taxi drivers, many of whom did not share his political views, the taxi-driver-turned-local-politician was then approached by trade unions to represent the interests of licenced taxi drivers in the political field. He explained in an interview:

I began to meet with trade unions and cooperatives, because they knew that I am a councilman. They began to invite me so I could, how can I put it, pave the way for them to get access to the right people [...] I met with them, we would discuss, and I would try to reach out to members of city council.

The taxi-driver-turned-local-politician became an advisor to the committee responsible for changing the law regulating the taxi market. But as a one-person representative of taxi drivers' interests without much power behind him, Roman has not been able to achieve what he or the trade unions had hoped for. Moreover, his views and interests did not always align with those of other members of the taxi field. Being a councilman from the ruling party, he was against more "radical" forms of protest, such as strikes, proposed by the trade union.

Hoping to change their situation through whispers, lacking the money to buy networks of lobbyists and with weak representation in the political field, taxi drivers engaged in social movements and trade unions have tried to mobilize the few networks they have.

Like doormen [Bearman 2005], taxi drivers often interact with people who are otherwise far removed from them in social space. Since Warsaw is the Polish capital taxi drivers have the opportunity to drive journalists, celebrities, politicians and businessmen.¹⁰ During a short lapse of time taxi drivers have close access to people with whom they do not interact outside of their work. Some drivers—especially those engaged in social movements and trade unions—have tried to make use of this situation by engaging with their customers and voicing their dissatisfaction. When they pick up a journalist they try to engage them in a discussion. Journalists—who are equipped with the symbolic power to turn private problems into public issues [Couldry 2003]—could amplify the voice of licenced taxi drivers by writing about them and their problems. Similarly, if they realize that they are driving a politician, they might start talking about the problems with the existing regulations, lack of enforcement, the surplus supply of taxis, the problem of illegal taxis and the undervalued price for the service.

¹⁰ Taxi drivers, however, do not necessarily interact with those at the very top as the elites tend to have their own drivers.

Although taxi drivers often interact with people from the upper part of the social structure, these interactions have been of limited use during their struggles over regulation. Unlike doormen, who build relationships with tenants over a long period of time [Bearman 2005], the relationships between taxi drivers and their fares are nearly always “fleeting” [Davis 1959]. Interaction between taxi drivers and their fares is difficult to sustain after the customer has left the cab. In other words, although Granovetter famously talked about the strength of weak ties [Granovetter 1973], the ties between taxi drivers and their sometimes powerful customers seem to be too weak to be strong. They cannot be mobilized to get the attention of the rule makers or—as in the case of doorman [Bearman 2005: 206-247]—the sympathy of the people who use taxis and will be affected once taxi drivers go on strike. For customers, their interactions with taxi drivers are usually nothing more than “disposable ties” that are burned as quickly as the transaction is over [Desmond 2012].¹¹

In order to obtain access to the rule makers, Tomek, who has been engaged in one of the trade unions, tried to resurrect old networks from his childhood. As he told me during our interview:

Well, I tried to get access to members of parliament before the current legislation was passed [...] I tried getting access to the office of the President, but that also was not successful. In primary school I went to class with the current chief of staff to the President, but he did not find the time, he did not find the time to talk to me.

With a lack of available networks and weak representation in the political field, actors who wanted to engage in whispering were dependent on what can be called *primitive accumulation of social capital*. Once Jarosław became a leader of a newly formed trade union Warszawski Taksówkarz [Warsaw Taxi Driver] in 2013, he began establishing relations with local politicians and journalists. Over time, these relations helped him get invited to radio shows and political meetings, and to be quoted in newspapers. When preparing a story on taxi drivers, journalists who have his number began calling him to be the *spokesperson* presenting the taxi drivers’ point of view. What helped Jarosław was that, once he became a union leader, he was granted symbolic power by the state and thus began to be *recognized* as someone

¹¹ This is not always the case. Sometimes taxi drivers do establish durable ties with their clients that stretch over a longer period of time. They might have a certain client that they always drive to work or a family member

who pays them to drive their child to school. But these are individual cases and, to my knowledge, they have not been used during political struggles.

who could speak on behalf of other taxi drivers. As union leader he began to be perceived as having the legitimacy to represent their collective interest, even though at that time only around 1% of all Warsaw drivers belonged to the union he headed.

Unable to gain direct access to, or the attention of, the people in power, taxi drivers often have to resort to *official communication* rather than discussing their concerns informally. Nevertheless, licenced taxi drivers have been able to claim small victories in their struggle against non-licenced drivers. In 2005 the parliament passed an amendment to the Transportation Act. The law stated that only licensed taxis are allowed to have a company logo above the car, place a lamp on top of their car and be equipped with a taxi meter. Licenced taxi drivers were also able to acquire the privilege of using the bus lanes, an important privilege that allows their customers to avoid traffic jams. After further struggles other amendments were introduced and, in 2011, “occasional transport” became illegal. However, at the same time, licenced taxi drivers lost the more important struggle over supply. In 2011 the Polish parliament, against the will of Warsaw’s local authorities, took away the right of cities to limit the number of taxi licences. Many non-licensed drivers acquired a licence, and the number of licences rose from 7,962 in 2005 to around 11,000 in 2016.

Hissing in state agencies and grunting in courts

In the Warsaw taxi field, as in any social field, there are two types of struggles: struggles over the rules and struggles within the existing rules. In the previous section I discussed the struggles over legislation regulating the Warsaw taxi market. I would now like to turn my attention to the struggles that have taken place within legislation. I would further like to distinguish between struggles over the *enforcement of legislation* and struggles over the *interpretation of legislation*. The former I capture under the notion of *hissing*, while the latter I call *grunting*.

As Bourdieu pointed out, much of the struggle around economic fields “takes the form of *competition for power over state power*—particularly over the power of regulation and property rights—and for the advantages provided by the various state interventions” [Bourdieu 2005: 204, emphasis in original]. Like whispering, hissing is part of competition for power over state power. However, unlike whispering, hissing is not oriented towards convincing state officials to create new

laws but rather aimed at using the existing law to one's advantage. Struggles within the existing law have taken place primarily in the headquarters of the Road Transport Agency (ITD), as licenced taxi drivers have been fighting over the enforcement of existing rules, *mobilizing the state* to more rigorously enforce existing legislation against non-licensed taxi drivers.

We have to remember that just because legislation exists does not mean that it will be enforced [Bourdieu 2005: 128-130]. Warsaw pedestrians cross the street on at red lights every day, but hundreds of police officers are not sent out to enforce the law and catch the lawbreakers. When an amendment to the Transportation Act that distinguished more clearly between licenced taxi drivers and occasional transport was passed in 2005, enforcing the law was not a priority for the authorities. Both the police and the ITD, which are the agencies responsible for the enforcement of transportation law, devoted few resources to its enforcement. In their fight against non-licenced drivers, a small group of very engaged licenced taxi drivers began to mobilize the state: putting pressure on different state agencies to enforce the existing regulations and to catch non-licenced drivers who were providing services illegally. Meetings were held with members of the ITD and the city municipality to pressure state officials to enforce the law.

When non-licenced drivers started to get caught and fined for providing services without a licence, they took their cases to court. The struggles over field boundaries moved from the streets and political offices to court rooms. In court rooms, struggles turned from struggles over the enforcement of the law and mobilization of the state, which took place within the political and bureaucratic field, to struggles over the interpretation of the law. This struggle took place within the juridical field [Bourdieu 1986b]. The form of voice related to the struggles over the interpretation of the law I call *grunting*.¹²

The cases against non-licensed drivers centred on interpreting the legal categories created by the Act of Transportation. Borrowing an expression coined recently by Luc Boltanski on the role of law in society [2014: 232, see also 2011: 50-83], we can say that the responsibility of the courts has been to express *the whatness of what*

¹² This was not the first time that the courts became engaged in the structures of the taxi field in Warsaw. Over the past 20 years the courts have been active participants in structuring the taxi market. They have

taken stances on the maximum price for the service (2000), the legality of barriers of entry [1997 and 1999], the legality of cash registers [2004] and the legality of limits on taxi competition at the airport [2014].

is in the taxi market.¹³ Courts had to make judgements as to whether a person caught by the ITD was “in fact” providing the service of a taxi driver, thus breaking the Transportation Act, or if he or she was “in fact” providing another service and thus not guilty of breaking the law. In other words, if the 2001 transportation law contributed to the emergence of two social groups in conflict with one another¹⁴—licenced taxi drivers and non-licenced drivers—courts were left to resolve the conflicts that emerged between those groups [Bourdieu 1986b: 837].

Let me provide two examples of such struggles that took place in courts over the “whatness of what is”. In their struggles against non-licenced drivers, licenced taxi drivers were able to push through an amendment to the law stipulating that only licensed taxi drivers may use a “taxi meter” (*taksometr*). Non-licensed drivers, caught and fined up to 3,500 euros, argued in court that their cars were not equipped with a “taxi meter,” but rather a different technical device which they referred to as a “distance counter” (*drogomierz*). The court had to take a stand on whether or not this “distance counter” was in fact a “taxi meter”. If that was the case it would mean that the non-licenced driver was breaking the law. If that was not the case then he or she was not breaking the law but simply providing a different service. In one case the Supreme Administrative Court argued against the non-licensed driver ruling that: “a distance counter is equivalent to the taxi meter, according to article 18 paragraph 5 point 1, because it serves the same purpose that a taxi meter does; that is, it calculates the charge for the trip of the taxi, something that requires a licence, which the applicant did not have.”¹⁵ The non-licenced driver was found guilty of breaking the law.

In the second case the Supreme Administrative Court had to decide, among others, whether the car of a non-licenced driver was

¹³ Boltanski writes about the role of law in society: “Law thus plays an essential role in the processes that stabilize reality. It helps make reality at once intelligible and predictable by pre-forming causal chains that can be activated to interpret events that occur. Obligated to link events to entities, the legal system has to have at its disposal an encyclopaedia of entities that it recognizes as valid. It is the law’s responsibility—as I suggested at the outset—to *express the whatness of what is*” [2014: 232, see also 2011: 50-83]. In medieval

philosophy the same idea was expressed with the notion of quiddity.

¹⁴ As Bourdieu pointed out “Law is the quintessential form of the symbolic power of naming that creates the things named, and creates social groups in particular. It confers upon the reality which arises from its classificatory operations the maximum permanence that any social entity has the power to confer upon another, the permanence we attribute to objects” [Bourdieu 1988b: 838].

¹⁵ II GSK 911/08.

equipped with a “taxi banner”, which according to the law could only be used by a driver with a taxi licence. In court, the non-licensed driver argued that:

the banner located on the roof of the vehicle was disconnected from the internal electrical system of the vehicle and could not easily be turned on. Due to this state of affairs one cannot say that the banner placed on the roof of the car was the same device as the one forbidden by the legislator in art. 18 paragraph 5 of the transportation law.

The non-licensed driver claimed that he was not providing the service of a taxi driver because he did not have a taxi banner. The trade union of licensed taxi drivers commented on this justification on its website writing: “Does the lamp standing on the table cease to be a lamp just because it is not connected to the outlet?” But while the union questioned this line of defence and provided a different categorization of the device, it was the judges who had the monopoly to establish *the whatness of what is*: whether the device was “in fact” a lamp or not and thus whether or not the non-licensed driver was “in fact” breaking the law. It was not the licensed taxi drivers but the judges who were the “authorized interpreters” equipped with the juridical capital and symbolic power to establish this “fact” [Bourdieu 1986b: 818]. And indeed in this case the court declared that the non-licensed driver had not broken the law. One of the arguments relied on by the court was that the banner located on the car roof could not be proved to be a lamp on the basis of the photos provided by the state authorities.¹⁶ The court sided with the non-licensed driver and against licensed drivers and the Road Transportation Agency.

These two examples show that struggles in courts are struggles over interpretations of rules; in other words, struggles over meanings [see Amsterdam and Bruner 2000].¹⁷ And it was up to judges, equipped with the “monopoly over legitimate symbolic violence” [Bourdieu 1986b: 838], to establish and enforce the official meanings, thereby (re)structuring the taxi field.

The successful trials were used by the trade union of licensed taxi drivers to further mobilize the state against non-licensed drivers. While some judges took the side of licensed taxi drivers against non-licensed ones, the other branches of the state, both at the local and national level, were not aware of this; they had the impression that the

¹⁶ II GSK 235/09

¹⁷ As Anthony Amsterdam and Jerome Bruner point out in their analysis of the legal system as a cultural system: “where there is

law, so too there must be categories. For law defines categorically the limits of the permissible, or, more often, of the impermissible” [2000: 8, see also 54-110].

state was losing all its cases against non-licensed drivers. In other words, one part of the state, responsible for law enforcement, did not necessarily know what the other part, responsible for legal interpretation, was doing. As one of the leaders of the struggle explained to me in an interview:

They [local authorities, police and ITD] did not want to enforce the law, because they said that the law has to be changed, because we are losing the court cases. All the court cases. But he [Artur] sat down and checked. For such a long time no one thought to check the court sentences. But he sat down checked and he called me, telling me: ‘fuck, we are winning, the law is good’.

Artur, a central figure of the principal taxi driver trade union at the time, found 30 court cases in an online archive, 20 of which went in favour of licenced drivers and 10 in favour of non-licenced drivers. After Artur checked the online database of previous court cases and rulings, the licenced taxi driver trade union spent less time trying to change the law and more pushing the authorities to enforce the existing one. Rather than engage in whispers and struggles over regulation, the union began to focus on hissing as they struggled over enforcement.

The problem with catching non-licenced drivers was that they had to be caught in the act of providing the service of a taxi driver. This meant that the customer being driven by the non-licenced driver has to testify that indeed he or she was provided with such a service. But customers would not necessarily testify that this was the case. They might testify that the driver was a “friend” giving them “a ride,” which in the eyes of the law would *make it a legal interaction* rather than *an illegal transaction*. Customers would do this because they were asked by the driver, but also because they might want to avoid legal troubles and having to go to court. City authorities would have to organize sting operations and have state officials engage in transactions with non-licenced drivers.

In their struggles over opportunities of exchange, a small group of licenced taxi drivers began to make use of the fact that the taxi market is a “switch role market” in which the seller can easily become the buyer [Aspers 2011]. An informal group of drivers—who called themselves an “anti-transporters group”—formed in 2011 and began entering the market as customers. They did so not with the aim of engaging in an economic transaction, but rather as a political act that would target illegal taxis and then report them to the authorities. The group worked *with* state agencies *against* non-licenced drivers. And while licenced taxi drivers did not have the *juridical capital* to directly participate in the interpretation of the law, they could participate indirectly in the legal process as their testimony would be used against non-licenced drivers.

Although a small group of licenced taxi drivers was able to organize against non-licenced drivers and had some success in mobilizing the state on their side, their fight over supply did not obtain the result they had hoped for. Court cases did not stop the inflow of non-licensed drivers. Out of the many drivers without a licence, only a few were caught and successfully trialled. The trials have been slow and often not conclusive, with some non-licenced drivers appealing successfully. One problem has been that both the law and the trials are targeted at individuals providing the service and not the firms using non-licensed drivers. As individuals are convicted slowly, taxi firms are able to find new drivers to take their place, convincing them that there are legal ambiguities and that what they are doing is not illegal. Moreover, taxi firms that have used the services of non-licensed drivers have, over time, found new ways to circumvent the law. One firm began employing their drivers not as taxi drivers but as “security guards”, who could operate under a security licence. These “security guards” were said to provide “safe transport” to their customers.

Like the more common everyday struggles between taxi drivers that take place on the streets of Warsaw and on the internet, the much less common struggles in court and state bureaucracy, too, were struggles over classification. If it is important to analyse the struggles taking place in juridical fields and look at how economic actors have tried to influence court decisions—or what I have called grunting—this is because, as Bourdieu pointed out, “jurists (as a differentiated body, etc.), by virtue of having the specific capital that they hold, exercise in the field of struggles for the construction of social reality a disproportionate influence in relation to other ordinary agents” [Bourdieu 2014: 331]. Courts do not have the power to say whether somebody is or is not a writer, musician or artist [Bourdieu 1993b]. But they have that power over the taxi field as they have the ability to decide whether somebody was legally or illegally performing the service of a taxi driver.

Shouting on the streets

Many of the struggles that I have described so far have taken place behind the scenes of public life. Neither everyday complaining and gossiping (murmuring), nor everyday conflicts between drivers (jeering), nor negotiations with politicians regarding regulation (whispering), nor struggles over enforcement or interpretation of regulations (hissing and grunting) are forms of contestation that would be visible to the general public. But when taxi drivers take to the streets

to protest, their acts are visible. Not only are such protests experienced by the general public directly as they try to move around in the city, but they also receive extensive media attention.

Unlike the other forms of contestation, which are often aimed at a very specific audience (politicians, bureaucrats, judges) and take place within the logic of specific fields (political, legal, bureaucratic), protests have to be located in the context of the wider social space [Bourdieu 1985b]. And because protests engage a larger number of actors and reach a wider audience, it therefore makes sense to capture this form of struggle under the notion of *shouting*.

In 2009, when a group of licenced taxi drivers was pushing politicians and bureaucrats to enforce the existing regulations, Artur wrote in *Warszawski Taksówkarz*, the official paper of the trade union of Warsaw taxi drivers (No. 1/2009):

If at this moment, with the court cases in our favour, we will be unable to get the state to enforce the law and get rid of this disease from the streets of our city [non-licensed taxi drivers], which unfairly is eating our income and bringing us to the edge of existence, this will be the end of our occupation [...] We have a deep conviction that in every one of us there is the will to fight for a better life and for dignity, which “occasional transport” has taken away from us; except that by now some of us lack the faith that any form of resistance can help. We assure you that it can, but *only if there will be enough of us and we will shout at the authorities with one voice*: “Away with occasional transport of persons!” Therefore colleagues, *wish us all the best during our conversations* at the MSWiA [Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration] and with the President [of Warsaw], but at the same time slowly *prepare for the possibility, that the voice of the few of us at those meetings will have to be supported by the sound of thousands of horns on blocked roads* (emphasis mine).

As many taxi drivers were murmuring on the streets and a few were whispering in political offices and grunting in courts and state agencies, a small group was already considering whether to organize collective protests. Over the following months, meetings were held by the trade union, both with local municipalities and central government, with the aim of changing the legislation and mobilizing the state to enforce the existing law. Taxi drivers were pushing authorities to take a firmer stance against non-licensed drivers in limiting the supply of taxis.

Six months later, in January 2010, Artur wrote on the trade union website about the meeting with state officials regarding the enforcement of regulations:

The conclusions are clear—our biggest task is to make POLITICIANS interested in our situation, because no bureaucrat will declare an open war against the pathology that has emerged on our streets. And because at this moment politicians—at least those from the government—are not really listening to us, a mass protest on the Streets of Warsaw seems inevitable [capital letters in original].

When the talks did not yield the results taxi drivers were hoping for, the trade union made a decision to organize a rally against non-licensed drivers. On 3 March 2010 hundreds of licensed taxi drivers blocked the roads around the Prime Minister's office to protest against non-licensed drivers. The rally was aimed at pushing city authorities to enforce the existing regulation: to catch, put on trial and convict those who were driving people in exchange for money without possessing a taxi licence.

This was not the first time taxi drivers had taken to the streets of Warsaw to protest. At the beginning of the 1990s, protests followed deregulation and the surge in the number of taxis on the streets. Drivers were demanding that the state reintroduce the barriers to entry removed by deregulation in 1989. In 1998, after the murder of a taxi driver, taxi drivers protested against the recent wave of violence against taxi drivers and publicly pushed for the re-introduction of the death penalty. In 1999-2000 they took to the streets to protest over the price of the service. In 2003-2004 taxi drivers protested against compulsory cash registers that were being introduced in taxis. There were also protests in 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012 over prices and supply. Apart from protests that have united drivers from different taxi firms, and in individual cases from different cities, over the years there have also been protests aimed not against the state, but against taxi firms which were forcing taxi drivers to buy new cars or had introduced new fees.

But even though Warsaw taxi drivers have taken to the streets a number of times over the years, overall it has been very difficult to mobilize drivers for collective action. Rarely have taxi protests involved more than 1,000 people (out of around 10,000), and often fewer than 200 or even 50 drivers took part. Most protests have been unsuccessful.

The lack of successful protests and strikes presents something of a puzzle. Theoretically, taxi drivers have what Peter Bearman calls *structural power*; that is, the ability to create, through strikes and protests, production problems in other sectors of the economic system [Bearman 2005: 206-208]. A collective effort by a large group of taxi drivers could make life very difficult for Warsaw's inhabitants. Possessing their own cars and with an in-depth knowledge of the inner workings of the city, taxi drivers are in a position to paralyse Warsaw. This structural power of taxi drivers could push the

authorities to meet their demands, as has been the case for example in Paris.¹⁸

One of the reasons why taxi drivers have not been able to use structural power has been their lack of a common identity. All of the social movement and trade union leaders that I talked to, who had tried or were still trying to organize protests, spoke of the lack of solidarity between members of their occupation. This lack of solidarity between licenced drivers was described by Artur who, after a few years of trade union engagement, became disappointed and quit. About one year after going completely “silent”—that is to say, withdrawing from the union and the different forms of struggle—Artur wrote a long post on one of taxi drivers’ internet forums entitled “A few words about the future of the taxi.” He laid out a grim prospect for the future of the occupation. He also presented two causes of the current situation of taxi drivers. First, the working conditions of taxi drivers were the fault of the state, which was weak and unable to enforce the existing law against non-licenced drivers. Second, Artur blamed the lack of community between drivers. Artur wrote:

The second factor [responsible for the working conditions] is our community, or in fact—the lack of it. Our community exists only as a physical group, which an observer can see, count and describe. But what this community lacks are real relations. We are like the residents of a block of flats who do not talk to each other, but only say good morning, and when it comes to doing something, no one knows what to expect of the other and in the end thinks only of himself. This is enough for when the faucet breaks down, but not enough when we have to fix the roof.

A factor that prevents solidarity among taxi drivers is the local character of the struggles. Although, according to the Central Registration and Information on Businesses, there were more than 80,000 taxi drivers in Poland in 2012, very rarely do drivers have a common interest and engage in a common struggle. Most of the political struggles of taxi drivers are not national but *local struggles*: prices and licences are established at the municipal level. In other words, taxi markets are “territorially based fields” [Bourdieu 2005: 135; see also Leschziner 2015]. The struggles of Warsaw’s licenced taxi drivers are usually not the struggles of licenced taxi drivers from Kraków, Wrocław or other Polish cities. That is why there have been

¹⁸ Richard Darbéra writes about French taxi drivers: “Over the last half-century the taxis have frightened off every French government into inaction and managed to

prevent any significant increase in the number of licenses. They also obtained the gradual extinction of the private-hires” [2010].

very few protests over the years that have united drivers across different cities.

But solidarity among taxi drivers is difficult to achieve even within Warsaw. Just as one does not find a collective identity that would unite Polish drivers across different cities, one does not find a collective identity that would unite Warsaw taxi drivers across different firms. As I have argued, when looking at the everyday conflicts between taxi drivers, what prevents the emergence of a sense of solidarity between licenced drivers is the structure of the Warsaw taxi market. Although there is a rotation of taxi drivers between firms, with drivers switching firms every few years, there are clear lines of conflict between drivers from different firms that prevent the creation of a collective identity among drivers. Because the Warsaw taxi market has the structure of a status market there are multiple micro-conflicts over classifications and opportunities for exchange. These everyday conflicts—which I have called jeering—scale up to group conflicts between licenced drivers from different taxi firms, which prevent the emergence of a collective identity of drivers across different taxi firms.¹⁹

Second, the lack of a collective identity among taxi drivers is due to the character of the job and the *habitus* of taxi drivers. Taxi drivers can benefit financially from boycotting collective action. When nurses or miners go on strike other members of the occupation do not earn more. However, when taxi drivers protest, the supply of taxis drops and it becomes easier for those boycotting the protest to find customers. Those boycotting the strike can, as taxi drivers say, “sweep the city” picking up clients. Moreover, mobilizing taxi drivers to collectively shout is difficult because they perceive themselves as entrepreneurs. They thus perceive other drivers not as fellow workers but rather as competition. For example, Maciek, whom I interviewed, told me:

I have never belonged to any trade union. How can you have a trade union of taxi drivers if a taxi driver is an entrepreneur [...] A taxi driver starts a union but with whom will he unite, if he is alone? You have a different interest, I have a different interest. You are a taxi driver, but you do not want me to drive a better Peugeot. We are competition!

Taxi drivers perceive themselves to be individualists or entrepreneurs all over the world [Berry 2006; Davis 2011; Hodges 2007]. This feeling is particularly strong in Poland because between 1945 and

¹⁹ The argument I am making is very similar to the one made by Norbert Elias and John Scotson, who argued in *Established and Outsiders* that collective identities and group conflicts within a city were created and destroyed through networks of “praise gossip” and “blame gossip” [Elias and Scotson 1965: 89-106].

1989, when Poland had a centrally planned economy, taxi drivers were one of the few social groups allowed to engage in private enterprise. What also contributes to the perception of being a small entrepreneur rather than a worker is the fact that, unlike, for example, taxi drivers in New York, who often rent cars on a day-to-day basis, taxi drivers in Warsaw usually own their cars.

Moreover, the job of a taxi driver attracts the kind of person who is difficult to mobilize for collective action. In my interviews and the survey, asked about what they like about their job, drivers would speak about their job providing them with “freedom” and “independence”. “Freedom” has to do with choosing one’s working hours, not having a “boss” who has authority and “tells you what to do.” But engaging in collective action requires giving up some of this “freedom”. As Bourdieu pointed out, criticizing Albert Hirschman, understanding the logic of collective action is not possible within a simple voice-exit dichotomy [Bourdieu 1986a]. Acting collectively requires an alignment of different voices because individuals *have to transfer their voice to the spokesperson* representing the formal or informal group [Bourdieu 1986a]. In the case of Warsaw taxi drivers, even those taxi drivers occupying central positions in trade unions would tell me that there is something strange about taxi drivers, who are independent contractors, organizing themselves in a trade union.

In order to collectively voice their concerns individuals have to become a choir rather than a group of soloists. But as I have been arguing, both the structures of the Warsaw taxi field and the *habitus* of many Warsaw taxi drivers make the creation of a collective identity and orchestration of taxi drivers’ voices difficult.

Conclusion

This article follows Mary Hesse, who argued that a theoretical explanation in science can take the form of a “metaphoric redescription of the domain of the explanandum” [1966: 157]. I have used such a metaphoric redescription to capture the contestation in and around the Warsaw taxi market by developing Hirschman’s metaphor of political action as voice.

If we look beyond the case of the Warsaw taxi market, introducing the typology of different forms of voice helps us to investigate the

more recent struggles that have been taking place in other taxi markets around the world. By investigating the different forms of voice we are able to go beyond an analysis of strikes and protests and take an analytical position that allows for a broader definition of what constitutes political struggles in markets. By looking at grunting we are able to capture the political nature of the classification struggles taking place in British courts as they had to decide whether or not the Uber app that calculates the price of the fare is “in fact” a taxi meter, thus bringing Uber drivers under the existing taxi regulations.²⁰ Similarly, we can see the political implications of the decision that was made by a US court on whether Uber drivers are “independent contractors,” as the company claims, or “employees.”²¹ By looking at murmuring and jeering we are able to see that in different taxi markets collective identities are established differently. For example whereas the trade union in Warsaw has been trying to mobilize “taxi drivers” and “firm owners” *against* Uber—that is, both the Uber company and Uber drivers—the New York trade union (the New York Taxi Workers Alliance) is trying to build a different coalition mobilizing “drivers”—both Yellow Cab drivers and Uber drivers—*against* the Uber corporation. In other words, while the typology of different forms of voice emerged out of a single case study, understanding how these forms combine and conflict with each other across social contexts could also open up new possibilities for comparative analysis, in a way similar to the approach recently delineated by Fourcade *et al.* (2016).

Looking beyond the advantages of using an extended voice metaphor to study taxi markets, using the voice metaphor helps to solve two theoretical problems of field theory. First, the typology of different forms of voice allows us to investigate the relationships between economic fields and the other fields that surround them. Second, it helps us take into account the fact that economic actors show very different levels of involvement in contestation.

One of the main goals of a field theoretical analysis of non-economic social space (religious, literary, juridical, scientific, journalistic and so on) is to capture their relative autonomy from their surroundings and especially from the economy [for example, Bourdieu

²⁰ Topham, Gwyn, David Hellier, and Aisha Gani. “Uber Wins High Court Case Over Taxi App”. *The Guardian* 2015: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/oct/16/uber-wins-high-court-case-taxi-app-tfl>. Web. 26 July 2016.

²¹ Levine, Dan. “Uber Drivers Remain Independent Contractors As Lawsuit Settled”. *Reuters* 2016: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-uber-tech-drivers-settlement-idUSKCN0XJ07H>. Web. 26 July 2016.

1991a: 3]. However, when sociologists use field theory to study economic fields, the emphasis should be the exact opposite. What should be emphasized is not how economic fields are relatively autonomous, but rather how they are embedded in the wider social space and especially how they are linked to the other fields [Bourdieu 2005: 1; Lahire 2012: 99]. The analysis of the Warsaw taxi market showed that many of the struggles that structure and restructure economic fields take place outside them: market regulations are established and contested within the political field, enforced and contested within the bureaucratic field, and interpreted and contested within the juridical field. These struggles are guided by the logic of the specific fields in which they take place and have their own distinct rhythms.

But field theory to date has lacked concepts that would allow us to study the links between fields. While ecological theory has concepts such as “avatars” and “hinges” that allow us to look at links between different ecologies [see Abbott 2005b], and systems theory has concepts such as “interpenetration” or “structural coupling” that aim to theorize the relations between systems, field theory does not have equivalent concepts. The typology of the different forms of voice introduces them. By studying grunting we are able to study the links between economic fields and the juridical fields; by studying hissing the link between economic fields and the bureaucratic fields; by studying whispering the link between economic fields and political fields; and by studying shouting, the link between the economic field and the larger social space. The typology of different forms of voice allows us to capture the nature of the different types of struggle that exist in and around specific markets, while at the same time providing us with tools to look for more general mechanisms found across cases. With the typology we are especially able to investigate the relationship between economic fields and the state—what Bourdieu called the competition for power over state power—treating the state not as a coherent entity but rather as a complex architecture of institutions (both central and local) and individual actors that may be in conflict with one another [Abbott 2005b; Bourdieu 2014].

The second theoretical problem that is solved by incorporating Hirschman’s voice metaphor into field theory is that it enables us to capture the fact that members of a field can show different levels of engagement in contestation. Contrary to what is often assumed in field theory, not all members of economic fields share the same *level of loyalty* (Hirschman) or *level of illusio* (Bourdieu). Not everyone believes equally that “the game is ‘worth the candle’” [Bourdieu 1998: 77]. As in the

literary universe studied by Bernard Lahire [Lahire 2010], in some economic fields there are actors who have only one foot in the game and those who are caught up in the game.²² Although in the case of the Warsaw taxi market it would be difficult to find actors who are completely “silent”—who never complain, classify others or protest—the level of involvement in contestation varies among members of the taxi field. At one end of the spectrum of involvement there are those who engage in the occasional murmur but do not participate in other forms of voice. If they are loyal to the field, this is not because they identify themselves as members of the field, but only because they are unable to find another job. At the other end of the spectrum of involvement we find a small group of drivers who develop a strong collective identity and become devoted to the struggle, engaging even at the cost of their family life and sometimes even income. It is these actors who participate in online discussions, write pamphlets, participate in “stings” against non-licensed drivers and in court cases, organize protests and mobilize others to participate in them. Their engagement in contestation is more than just a matter of routine activity. For them, contestation becomes a passion [see Lahire 2003: 339].

Because we are focusing on different ways of *voicing* (*murmuring*, *grunting* and so on) we arrive at a relational and processual account of contestation [see Desmond 2014: 566]. We are able to follow various actors across different locations as they struggle over field boundaries. We are able to trace how the engagement of actors changes at both an individual and a group level; how some actors become involved in struggles while others “burn out.” In this article this was illustrated by the case of Artur. Over the course of a few years Artur went from low engagement in contestation, through a stage of participation in online discussion, through a stage of a very passionate engagement in different forms of contestation and hope regarding the future, to a stage of almost complete silence and *anomie* caused by his disappointment with the outcome of his previous engagement. Such emphasis on social process and change pushes field theory much closer to an ecological approach [Abbott 2005b]. This ecological approach is not only better equipped to investigate the relationships between distinct but

²² Echoing the work of Bernard Lahire, John Levi Martin and Forest Gregg recently pointed out that field theory needs to take into account that “in many fields we find a core differentiation that pertains to the

degree of commitment to the inherent logic of the field and a correlative dispersion of strategies and trajectories” [Martin and Gregg 2015: 51].

linked social spaces but “is far more fluid and dynamic, capturing more aspects of difference and more empirical diversity in the way actors act and groupings of actors change” [Abbott 2005a].

There are many advantages in using a voice metaphor to organize empirical material on contestation in and around economic fields. But, as with any metaphor, there are also certain limits and risks. Most importantly, using the voice metaphor runs the risk of under-emphasizing non-verbal forms of contestation. While many of the struggles taking place in and around markets are verbal—this includes struggles on the streets, in court rooms and in political offices—there are also non-verbal ways of engaging in contestation, including physical fights, sit-ins, and hunger strikes.

Nevertheless, even though Bourdieu’s theory is already made up of an extended network of concepts and number of different metaphors,²³ incorporating a typology of different forms of voice into field theory means more than just introducing unnecessary nuance [cf. Healy forthcoming]. Equipped with a typology of different forms of voice we are able to look at the political foundations of markets, going beyond Polanyi’s theory of the “double movement” of commodification and de-commodification and Hirschman’s very similar theory of the “shifting involvements” between private interest and public action [Polanyi 1944; Hirschman 1982]. By studying different forms of voice we are able to capture the cacophony of contestation that exists both within and around markets.

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²³ Bourdieu’s theory is filled with metaphors: economic metaphors (“cultural capital”, “economy of symbolic good”, “inflation of titles”, “monopoly of symbolic violence”), electro-magnetic metaphors (“field of forces”,

“magnetic field”), musical metaphors (“conductorless orchestration”, “improvisation”), religious metaphors (“orthodoxy”, “heterodoxy”) and sports metaphors (“rules of the game”, “player”, “strategy”).

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Résumé

Cet article analyse les luttes politiques à l'œuvre à l'intérieur et autour du marché des taxis de Varsovie. En m'appuyant sur la théorie des champs de Pierre Bourdieu et la métaphore de l'action politique comme « voix » proposée par Albert Hirschman, j'étudie les prises de position des agents du champ des taxis, en soulignant les différents niveaux d'engagement dans les luttes. En distinguant différents types de « voix » – notamment le murmure, le chuchotement, le grognement, etc. –, je montre que les luttes inhérentes au marché des taxis à Varsovie sont avant tout des luttes de classifications et d'opportunités d'échange. L'article décrit comment les institutions de marché sont établies et contestées dans le champ politique; imposées et contestées dans le champ bureaucratique; et interprétées et contestées dans le champ juridique. Appuyé sur une enquête terrain réalisée à Varsovie entre novembre 2012 et juin 2013, l'article contribue finalement à la théorie des champs et à l'étude des liens entre les champs économiques et l'Etat.

Mots-clés : Bourdieu ; Classification ; Bourdieu ; Marché des taxis ; Théorie des champs sociaux ; Action politique ; Varsovie.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Aufsatz untersucht die politischen Kämpfe in und um den Warschauer Taximarkt. Aufbauend auf der Feldtheorie Pierre Bourdieus und Albert Hirschman's Metapher der politischen Aktion als „Stimme“, versuche ich die Stellungnahmen der Taximarktmittglieder zu verdeutlichen, wobei den auf unterschiedlichen Ebenen ausgetragenen politischen Kämpfen ein besonderer Augenmerk gilt. Die Differenzierung zwischen verschiedenen stimmlichen Ausdrucksformen – insbesondere des Murmelns, Flüsterns, Zischens, Grunzens, Schreiens – erlaubt mir zu zeigen, wie die für den Warschauer Taximarkt charakteristischen Kämpfe hauptsächlich Kämpfe um Klassifizierungen und Tauschgelegenheiten sind. Ich beschreibe, wie Marktinstitutionen entstehen und auf politischer Ebene angefochten, wie sie auf bürokratischer Ebene durchgesetzt und bekämpft werden, und auf juristischer Ebene interpretiert und infrage gestellt werden. Eine zwischen November 2012 und Juni 2013 durchgeführte Feldforschung beschreibend, untersucht der Aufsatz die Beziehung zwischen Ebenen und insbesondere wirtschaftlichen Bereichen und dem Staat.

Schlüsselwörter : Bourdieu; Klassifizierung; Hirschman; Taximarkt; Theorie der sozialen Felder; Politische Handlung; Warschau.