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## Spatial capital as a tool for planning practice

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*This purpose of this article is to look at the potential benefits for planning practice of engaging with spatial capital; a concept derived from the social theory of Bourdieu. Doubt is expressed about the theoretical basis for spatial capital, nevertheless, it is argued that it may have merit as a trope for planning practitioners. Spatial capital has a strong empirical basis, making it accessible to planning practice and offering a new means for interpreting and communicating the combined effects of a range of individual urban events such as the gating of communities, differing mobilities and schooling tactics. By focusing on the interplay of social positioning within place it emphasises the joined-up nature of disadvantage and highlights the limits of environmental determinism. However, its use is not without possible drawbacks. Here, the experience of social capital is informative, as this has been appropriated by groups with quite different readings of its implications for policy.*

Keywords: Bourdieu, social space, spatial capital, urban planning, social capital

## Introduction

The focus of this article is the introduction of the term 'spatial capital' by a number of writers employing Bourdieu's social theory to interpret how people engage with place and space. Although critical of this introduction in theoretical terms, this article asks if, nevertheless, there is potential in having spatial capital become common currency in planning practice. To date engagement with Bourdieu's work has been more through planning theory. This engagement is unsurprising; he was a polymath whose interests included research methods, the nature of knowledge and the importance of taking a reflexive approach to academic practice. Reflecting this, his work has appeared in planning theory literature in support of a range of different theoretical perspectives. This includes calls for planners to engage with his work in order to refine a more reflective practice in relation to both the nature and quality of knowledge employed in planning and in the institutions and processes of practice (Gunder 2011; Howe & Langdon 2002). Bourdieu also helps draw attention to the subtle means through which power runs through planning practice (Mace 2015; Shin 2012). These are examples of planning theory seeking to bring Bourdieu's work to bear *on the practitioner*, on flows of power within, on and from the profession. Here, the focus is on the possibility of spatial capital providing a useful trope *for the practitioner*. Spatial capital might provide a 'shorthand' term that planners can readily employ that could further a dialogue about people as active agents in seeking preferential social positions within and through physical places. Just as places are not bounded but acquire meaning in relation to other places (Graham & Healey 1999; Healey 2007), so, a person's experience within a place is formed in relation to others who occupy that place. Spatial planning could help planners in practice to draw greater attention to the combined effects of people seeking positions within place; to the power of homology of fields in

Bourdieu's terms. This adds another dimension to calls for a relational sense of place in planning which could help to focus the planner on the multiplicity of ways in which the social plays out in within place. Ready comparisons might be made with social capital that has found its way into everyday practice. However, this highlights the dangers as much as any advantage in introducing spatial capital as a planning trope. It is shown here that spatial capital, as a derivation of Bourdieu's theory, has been given multiple meanings and could be overlaid with many more. Like social capital it would, therefore, be open to broad appropriation and interpretation.

To develop the argument, the article is structured as follows: in the first section the spatiality of Bourdieu's perspectives is examined. This starts by looking at why Bourdieu's work is sometimes regarded as lacking a sufficient spatial dimension (Hillier & Rooksby 2005; Savage 2011), leading to calls for the addition of spatial capital. The second section is used to look at examples of work that propose the idea of spatial capital. The 'identifications' of spatial capital come from a range of disciplines, and cover different aspects of urban life. All use Bourdieu's theory, although with differing emphasis and depth, and all introduce spatial capital to emphasise the use of place or 'place plus mobility' as an asset in its own right, which creates powerful social advantage through the command over place and/or place plus mobility. It is argued that while the case for requiring the addition of spatial capital to Bourdieu's schema is questionable there may be a useful unintended outcome for planning practitioners. All of the studies look at aspects of the built form that are of concern to planners: neighbourhood belonging, sense of place, access to services and employment, mixed communities and the role of governance and time in influencing change in the built form. Given this, in the third section the use of spatial capital by planning practitioners is considered; what might it bring to planning practice. Spatial capital presents

itself as a readily useable tool for practitioners that might help to segue from Bourdieu's expansive theory to practice. However, it is argued that the benefits are not unequivocal. The potential pitfalls of seeking to bring spatial capital to planning practice are considered and where, it is argued, the experience of social capital is analogous.

## **The Spatiality of Bourdieu**

There are two related reasons why Bourdieu's spatiality might be uncertain. First, his works have appeared in English translation over an extended period and not in the order they were produced, with much still awaiting translation. Second, and related, Bourdieu's prioritisation of space varied during his career as he developed different aspects of his theory (Savage 2011). The variable emphasis of the spatial (including access to English language translations) is reflected in writing from English language academia that draws on his work. Indicative of this is that while he is absent from the first edition of *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* he appears in the second (Hubbard, Kitchin & Valentine 2004, Hubbard & Kitchin 2011). A complete edited work is dedicated to seeking out the links between Bourdieu's concept of habitus and place (Hillier & Rooksby 2005). Meanwhile, citations of his work appear only in later work on relational planning (eg Healey 2007). Despite growing recognition, one reason why Bourdieu's work is still not mainstream in urban studies is because in his later career Bourdieu remained attached to social analysis understood within national borders, resisting the implications of globalisation (Savage 2011:512). Published in the same year as Savage's chapter, a book by Fogle (2011) is premised on the inherently spatial character of Bourdieu's sociology.

There are certainly points where Bourdieu foregrounds the role of place, including his earlier work, which is marked by an interest in how physical space reflects social relations in the case of the Kabyle household. This, he argues, reflects social, particularly gendered, relations (Bourdieu 1990; Fogle 2011). Here, it is possible to see Bourdieu's direct treatment of how the materiality of place plays an important role in representing and maintaining social relationships. Gender relations are written into the layout of the house and, because people experience this physical environment all the time, it is a powerful way of maintaining the power relations depicted. In later work, Bourdieu again pays direct attention to how the materiality of place might itself impact the social (Bourdieu 2000b). Elsewhere in his work, he is not so specific about place. However, as has been seen, where he addresses place, its ordering is powerful precisely because it is ubiquitous and subliminal. Therefore, where 'place' is not specified in his work it does not follow that its importance is not sufficiently recognised.

A significant shift is marked in *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1986), where Bourdieu starts to stress field over habitus. Habitus describes a disposition inclining people to a way of seeing and acting in the world. Its purpose is to lay greater stress on individual agency than Marxist analysis with its emphasis on production classes (Bourdieu 1985). Through habitus Bourdieu seeks to give weight to individual agency while recognising that a person's 'character' or inclinations are still significantly socially determined (Bourdieu 2005b). In short, he seeks to go beyond, but not to dismiss class. Given the 'work' that habitus is asked to do, mediating between agency and determinism, Bennett et al (2009) argue that it is particularly problematic. Although Bourdieu did not abandon habitus, he did turn to give greater emphasis to field. While others such as Lefebvre (1991) point to the relationship between physical and social space, it is field theory that highlights the mechanisms of the relational

nature of social and physical space as people seek to take social positions, and are socially positioned within place. From the perspective of field theory, habitus helps or hinders a person in recognising the stakes within a field that justify engagement.

Despite the material basis of the metaphor, fields are more akin to an unseen force field; it holds together people who have a stake in the field. It exists because there is something to compete for and, for those engaged in the field, it holds within its force field a set of rules (Bourdieu 1977: 169; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 97). A field can exist wherever a set of interests and forces exist; for example through the expression of preferences for particular types of art (Bourdieu 1993) and housing (Bourdieu 2005a). Any field contains a set of tacitly understood rules. These are not immutable but they are durable, not least because they work to the advantage of those with 'higher status' habitus and greater amounts of capital. The field serves to limit what is open for discussion in any encounter, what will be seen as reasonable and what will be seen as unreasonable (Bourdieu 1977). The field obscures acts of social power by making the range of 'reasonable' discussion appear as natural, as common sense. This obscuring of social power is also a feature of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of capitals, returned to below. Along with a more general disposition, or habitus, the possession of, and ability to deploy, capital allows a person to gain social advantage – to seek 'distinction' – within a field. Distinction is the making of choices that confer social advantage; the 'right' education, preferences in art and entertainment, housing and neighbourhood and so on. Social, cultural and economic capital all have a symbolic (or hidden) quality to them. This symbolic aspect refers to the 'misrecognition' of the qualities of a capital as given rather than as being socially created. This hides the fact that the legitimacy of a capital comes from what it can do rather than from any intrinsic worth:

“...symbolic capital (male honour in Mediterranean societies, the honourability of the *notable* or the Chinese Mandarin, the prestige of the celebrated writer, etc.) is not a particular kind of capital but what every kind of capital becomes when it is misrecognized as capital, that is, as a force, a power or capacity for (actual or potential) exploitation and therefore recognized as legitimate.”

(Bourdieu 2000a: 242)

The combined effect of the field and the symbolic nature of capital is to hide the exercise of power by making self-interested choices appear as natural or taken for granted; that there is no alternative. Finally, for this brief overview, if habitus and capitals make an individual relatively effective in one field it is likely that they will be in an advantageous position in a number of fields. This produces a homology of field; a compound advantage. This is not a simple translation of advantage from one field to another but persists as something more familiar as a class relation (Swartz 1997: 132). These concepts are return to below as consideration is given to how spatial capital has been drawn from, and overlaid on, them in various ways. In the following section an outline of how spatial capital has been conceived and employed is set out before looking at its potential use for planners.

## **Spatial capital**

The instances of work identifying spatial capital are notable for being rooted in empirical studies of urban social dynamics describing urban events close to the everyday concerns of planners with a political economy/‘just city’ orientation (Binder 2011). All four cases look at how privileged groups employ urban place and space to their advantage – utilising place



sometimes in combination with mobility and which produce inequitable opportunities. This starts with the work of Centner (2008), who pays the closest attention to the breadth of Bourdieu's theory and in particular to field theory. He looks at the dot-com boom period in the late 1990s and how groups of so-called 'dot-com' workers flush with cash "combined privilege with free-ranging territorial claims to the city" (194). He is focused on how they enjoyed a sense of entitlement (linked to habitus), allowing them to occupy, dominate and define particular places. He gives the example of a 'wine club' meeting in Mission-Dolores Park, described as "one of the few sites [in the neighbourhood] for families in the areas to bring their children to play outdoors" (212). The dot-com group crowded out local families from tables in the park and were approached by police in a most prudent manner despite the group's "...flagrant infraction of public alcohol consumption" (212). This provides us with an example of what Bourdieu refers to as 'symbolic violence'; that is, the imposition of one's group's norms on another. For Centner, this serves as one illustration of how the dot-com group was able to deploy their individual capitals to have their behaviour accepted where others would not. Attention is given to the process of misrecognition (facilitated by fields), whereby the inclinations of habitus and the exercise of capitals appear to render as 'natural' the domination of space by the dot-com workers. This 'misrecognition' of economic, social and cultural capital permits the legitimisation of claims on space (Centner 2008: 203). He argues that this represents a separate, spatial, capital: "*Spatial capital*, then, is a form of symbolic capital in a field where material space is at stake" (197 [emphasis in original]). To the extent that choices made by deploying social, cultural and economic capitals in a field appear to be 'natural', the spatial consequences will similarly appear to be a given.

The next usage comes from Barthón & Monfroy (2010), who focus on the interplay between place and space, fixity and mobility, in the schooling strategies of households

from a range of social backgrounds in Lille. The work looks at the familiar subject of the strategies of middle-class households aimed at securing access to better schooling. In so doing, it employs statistical methods to test if it is possible to 'envisage' spatial capital existing independently of other capitals as "...a capacity in its own right to bring into play spatial resources which have a specific impact in terms of equality?" (Barthon & Monfroy 2010: 178). In a study that lightly references Bourdieu, they apply regression analysis to test for the significance of both locality and mobility in relation to social background, in terms of accessing high quality schooling. Of particular significance for planners is the joint impact of position and situation. To give an examples: where pupils with lower social backgrounds are in a favourable position because they live in upper-middle-class neighbourhoods, they are more likely to attend privileged schools. However, the proportion attending is much lower than pupils from higher social backgrounds. And, although children from both higher and lower social backgrounds are both quite mobile in moving to schools outside their area of residence, in general, pupils from poorer social backgrounds are commuting from a place with very poor schools to somewhere with less poor (as opposed to 'good') schools. In short, those with a higher social background are more able to exploit the potential benefits of place and mobility. The combined ability to capitalise on place and space, on location and mobility, leads Barthon & Monfroy (2010) to conclude that place and space strategies powerfully reinforce one another.

The link between location and mobility is also the focus of the third example, where R erat & Lees (2011) look at gentrification in the Swiss cities of Neuchatel and Zurich West. One of the key arguments of their paper is the need to balance an approach to residential place that takes into account both mobility and rootedness "...by looking at the mobility

experiences of individuals and the fixity of place” (127). This focus is identified as a corrective to an over-emphasis in mobility in recent work on the city. They argue that the traditional cultural distinction made between the suburbs and gentrification “...is breaking down in the face of recent studies that point to the suburban mind-set of contemporary gentrifiers...” (128) and that differing mobilities between suburban and gentrifier residents better distinguishes the two groups. Focused on the interplay between fixity and mobility, and building on the work of Flamm & Kaufmann (2006) & Kaufmann (2002), mobility is conceptualised as a form of spatial capital. They find that gentrifier households rated highly a series of mobility-related aspects when evaluating their choice of residential location. The highly rated characteristics allowed them to be both ‘mobile and rooted’ (139). They valued city centre living because it provided closeness to work, shops and other facilities such as childcare but also because it provided ready access to train stations, allowing fast access to other city centres. Rérat & Lees describe these two forms of movement as proximity and connectivity patterns, and compare them to suburban patterns, which are characterised by the need for the household to access other sites through multiple and diffuse travel patterns (see also Jarvis et al 2001). In essence, mobility, or spatial capital, in this context represents the ability to minimise journey times to work and services and to transport nodes that give access to the centre (or the city of residence) and other city centres.

Last, is the work of Marom (2014), who employs the term ‘spatial distinction’ rather than capital, and so focuses on the outcome of engaging in fields rather than the capitals that people take into any given field. His work is introduced here for a number of reasons. First, like Barthón & Monfroy (2010), but with a very different method, he seeks to focus on the outcome of competition within fields at the city-wide rather than the neighbourhood level. Linked to this, and relevant to planning, he looks at how officials and administrators within

the city authority have acted to support a spatial logic rather than focusing on the actions of residents. Finally, he attunes us to the changing of strategies over time. He charts the development of Tel Aviv, identifying three distinct periods, and noting how the relationship, including separation, between Tel Aviv and its 'sister' city, Jaffa, is managed. From its early phase of development, he traces the effort to retain both a physical and cultural separation between (Hebrew) Tel Aviv and (Arab) Jaffa. As Tel Aviv expanded, the maintenance of spatial distinction (physical and cultural separation) faced two challenges as Tel Aviv and Jaffa became intertwined and also as Tel Aviv itself developed socio-cultural distinctions within the 'Hebrew city'. This leads him to conclude that by taking a long historical picture of the whole city it is possible to trace shifts in the scale at which spatial distinction has occurred. In parallel to the study by Centner (2008), he focuses, in particular, on how spatial distinction comes to be seen as natural.

### **The Limits of spatial capital as theory**

The claim to a need to bracket out spatial capital implies that Bourdieu's work is lacking a sufficient treatment of the spatial dimension. As has been seen, the spatiality of Bourdieu is more evident when the focus is on the field. A field, itself, can have a spatial element to it. A neighbourhood, other public realm or housing can be construed as a field, in the case of the latter Bourdieu (2005a) works through an extensive example. Rather than a spatial element such as housing being another form of capital it can, rather, be treated as a field through which the existing capitals are deployed. Moreover, housing, to continue the example, may add to other capitals. It can increase economic capital through an increase in asset value, social capital by giving more ready access to high status individuals as neighbours and cultural capital by exhibiting 'distinction' through the choice of a house to give just three examples. Insofar as spatial elements (housing, neighbourhood or access for example), can

enhance the three existing capitals this might be a case for distinguishing it by viewing it as a capital in its own right. However, even where less advantaged individuals reside in close or relatively close proximity to advantaged individuals differing levels of social and cultural capital override any spatial advantage; therefore the spatial may not in and of itself be advantageous. As Barthon & Monroy (2010) demonstrate, where higher and lower status households live in close proximity with access to the same range of schools, higher status households access better performing schools to a greater degree than lower status households. And where they travel to schools it is to better schools than pupils from lower status households. Therefore, spatial capital is not so much an independent capital taken into a field; rather it is describing an outcome of 'successful' engagement in a field. This is reflected in the conclusion of Barthon & Monfroy (2010), that it is not possible to identify with certainty the operation of spatial capital independent of social, cultural and economic capitals. However, this is not a conclusive dismissal of social capital as, it is important to remember, the different authors are seeking to define it in different ways. Therefore, Barthon and Monfroy (2010) are simply able to discount social capital in the terms in which they seek to employ it.

In more practical terms, adopting spatial capital as an add-on to, or specification of Bourdieu's theory contains the danger of encouraging the generation of ever increasing categories of capitals – ethnicity, gender and so on – while failing to recognise how these are already accounted for through field theory. This danger is recognised, in relation to habitus, by Butler & Robson (2003), who, in seeking to identify a metropolitan habitus, recognise the danger of proliferating different subtypes of habitus. It is noteworthy that a body of work exists which draws on Bourdieu to describe social positioning in place without invoking spatial capital. For example, in their extensive work on Bedford, an upmarket suburb of New

York City, Duncan & Duncan (2004) have looked at competition to define place within the upper middle classes. Other work in this vein includes Butler & Robson (2003) on different groups of gentrifiers in London, and Savage et al (2005) on suburban residents in Manchester. These examples are focused on intra-middle-class struggles over space and given this different focus it might be argued that the 'need' to invoke spatial capital is less apparent. However, a final example is that of Fleischer (2010), who provides a perspective from outside North America and Europe when she focuses on suburban residents vying for social position within a growing suburb of Beijing. Here, she describes disputed definitions of space across actors with strongly contrasting 'class' backgrounds but again does not seek to use spatial capital to do so. Notwithstanding Fleischer's work, spatial capital has been invoked where there is evidently gross inequity across 'classes' in the ability of people to position themselves advantageously within a given place rather than where 'intra-class' struggles exist. While only Marom (2014) relates directly to planning, spatial capital may, therefore, suggest itself to planners as having political purchase in drawing attention to gross inequalities emerging from social positioning within place. With this in mind, in the following section consideration is given to its potential as a tool for planning practice.

### **Employing spatial capital in planning practice**

While the need to add social capital to Bourdieu's schema has been argued to be a case unproven, spatial capital may still have a utility for planning practitioners. It is this contention that is developed in this section. In charting the development of planning as a practice and an academic discipline, Hall (2002) noted many years ago that planning theory and practice appear to have taken divergent paths. This point continues to be noted by practitioners and theorists (Binder 2011; Campbell & Marshall 1998; Gunder 2011). As noted, Bourdieu's theory is expansive, and is not readily transferable to practice; rather, it

has been used as means to analyse practice. Referencing spatial capital may have the benefit of grounding a complex and subtle theory in practice. Its use could provide a 'familiar' term, reflective of social capital through which to have practitioners engage with the significant interplay between social and physical space. In order to be useful to practitioners, theory should address issues of power (Binder 2011), and spatial capital provides such a focus. The potential utility of spatial capital is broken down into a number of related elements, although they are treated separately here for clarity they are, in practice, closely related. First, it allows planners to bring together a series of urban 'events' under a common conceptual framework. Making connections between events could offer a more holistic insight into the operation of power in the built environment. Second, it could contribute to the development of a more reflexive practice by highlighting planners' assumptions of what is and is not a given. And third, it could direct planners to the distinction between place and position that highlights the limits of deterministic approaches to the built form.

First, spatial capital may be a useful trope that helps planners to bring together a series of urban events that could offer considerable insight into the operation of power in the urban environment. It can draw attention to the homology of actions, where people seek to employ capitals in ways that have a spatial dimension, and that, *taken together*, produce powerful advantage for some over others (Bourdieu 1986). People with a particular disposition (habitus) and capitals are likely to be successful across a series of fields including through the interplay of fixity and mobility. Drawing on the earlier examples, groups are at liberty to take possession of parts of the city (Centner 2008). Households are able to 'game play' advantageous schooling provision which they do both through fixity and mobility (Bartho & Monfroy 2010), in the same way as households seeking optimal access to work

and other offers of the city such as cultural attractions (Rérat & Lees 2011). Any particular household may do all of these, therefore, spatial capital may be a powerful trope for planners seeking to describe and address powerful compound effects. The implication of this is the need for a holistic approach to social disadvantage rather than a piecemeal focus on particular ‘events’ such as gated communities. The works detailed readily reveal connections that planners would need to bring together as they seek to challenge disadvantage (see Figure One). As Centner (2008) shows, it is not enough to simply provide a park, planning needs to work with other agencies of city governance to ensure fair access to all.

	Centner	Barthon & Monfroy	Rérat & Lees	Marom
<b>Focus</b>				
How gentrification is enacted	**		**	
How resources of social reproduction are captured	*	**		
Misrecognition; ‘Naturalisation’ of power	**			**
Fixity-mobility	*	**	**	
<b>Methodological issues</b>				
Time				**
Scale		*		**

**Figure 1:** Overview of foci and methodological issues in articles employing spatial capital (where number of stars indicates emphasis in article).

Second, spatial capital could draw attention to ‘the power of the possible’ by drawing practitioners to original aspects of Bourdieu’s work, including misrecognition; in this case,



the 'natural' or the taken-for-granted in the built form. The role of planners in consciously and unconsciously lending weight to the exercise of capitals by residents is emphasised by Marom (2010), who focuses on the governance of Tel Aviv and the hidden assumptions, the 'natural choices' that have shaped the city, leading him to note; "a generic and generative process by which social difference is inevitably and intricately objectified in urban space is left under-theorized" (Marom 2010: 1345). In essence this directs us back to a more general literature on the reflexive practitioner (Howe & Langdon 2002). Insofar as spatial capital directs planners to the concepts of misrecognition and field, it could prove useful to planners in reflecting on their assumptions of what is given and what is open to contestation and why things are as they are.

Third, spatial capital could provide a link to Bourdieu's differentiation of place and position which highlights the limits of deterministic approaches to the built form; a longstanding criticism of planning, and one seen as increasingly inadequate in the contemporary world (Graham & Healey 1999). Bourdieu's focus on the interplay of the social and physical worlds is powerful for planners because it emphasises the ways in which people have acted, and will act within any given planned place. Deterministic attempts to influence people through place may be limited by the 'positional' power that people exercise within place. Although founded in very different philosophical roots, the use of Bourdieu may inform a common criticism of planning levelled by some urban economists. In an extended critique of urban planning and regeneration policy in the UK, Cheshire et al (2014) conclude that, despite much focus by policymakers on the effects of place on people's life changes, "when it comes to determining your life chances and welfare, who you are is much more important than where you live in a city" (72). Put another way, being poor is a problem rather than where in the city you are poor. They make temporary bedfellows in directing planners to the

importance of the individual; both, for example, cast doubt over the efficacy of policies aimed at social mixing across classes (Bourdieu 2000b: 128; Cheshire et al 2008). However, they are clearly distinguished by their interpretation of the socio-economic drivers of individuals and the extent of their choices. Bourdieu roundly dismisses explanations of social-spatial sorting in the city based on the choices of *homo economicus* (2005a: 73). For him, social power, a lack of the power to choose, is key, not the 'hidden hand' of the market. However, Bourdieu, while offering an alternative premise, positively contributes to critiques of planning as overly focused on the built form.

### **The limits of spatial capital in practice**

While employing spatial capital might appear to provide a ready term with potential leverage, comparisons to social capital help highlight a potential pitfall. If spatial capital were to come into use in planning, it would be a term at some distance from its theoretical roots (as an addition to Bourdieu's theory), and as such, it could be particularly open to misappropriation. Social capital has had considerable impact on the political and policy community in the UK, especially under the New Labour administration of 1997-2010. However, it was not Bourdieu's version that was employed but, rather, that of Putnam (2001). This is explained by the attraction of Putnam's version to the body politic. While Bourdieu provided a version of social capital that was part of a process of seeking individual gain in competition within fields, Putnam's version provided a focus on intra- and inter-communal help that could help facilitate the 'rollback' of state help and make citizens more work ready (Edwards & Foley 1998; Peck et al 2009). Illustrating one way in which social capital has been interpreted to suit a conservative rather than a radical agenda, Kearns (2004:23), argues, "Social capital turns the focus from financial poverty to 'network poverty'". A recent illustration of how social capital is adapted readily to contemporary

political agendas in planning comes from UK where the present government has included in its justification of neighbourhood planning (accompanied by the removal of most regional planning), its potential to increase social capital (Letwin 2015). Where spatial capital is introduced it is conceptualised in different ways and therefore, like cultural capital, reflects different emphases in different sources. Rather than providing a single concept of spatial capital the literature cited indicates that the exact meaning and significance of the term can be contested, as has been the case for social capital.

Spatial capital has arisen in other fields where there appears to be an intention to emphasise the inequity of position taking within place. Transferred to planning, spatial capital could play a similar role. But the very appeal of spatial capital's ready portability into planning practice brings with it the risk of multiple appropriations, of being deployed in multiple ways, it could be usurped by a range of parties, potentially hiding power interests rather than illuminating them (Gunder 2011: 208). It could easily become another slogan foisted on planners rather than being a tool of their own making. Beyond cultural capital, ready comparisons could be made with terms such as community and sustainability that are equally open to re-appropriation. As Brent (2004) argues in relation to community it could be a powerful organising term because of its adaptability and flexibility but because of this, it would be open for adoption and use by both conservative and socially progressive forces.

The final point returns us to a broader critique of Bourdieu's work. He recognised that position taking in a field can and will produce a reaction (2000a), fields may constrain the terms of the debate they do not eliminate resistance (Binder 2011). However, Bourdieu is relatively silent on the agency of the less privileged. While the upper and middle classes are engaged in a battle for distinction, the working classes are confined to

choices and actions born out of necessity (Swartz 1997: 152). This is reflected in all of the works reviewed, where the actions described are those of the more privileged acting spatially while the resistance of the less privileged is absent from the accounts. Here, urban economists might argue that Bourdieu is unhelpful in rendering those less privileged overly the victim of their circumstance and underplaying their ability to act (returning us to the opposing perspective of the 'freedom' of market choices versus the 'constraints' of social choices). Connected to this is a further criticism articulated by Rancière (2003: 366 in Deranty 2010), who argued that Bourdieu fell into the 'Marxist trap' of assuming the necessity of an educated and enlightened elite to reveal to the working class the condition of oppression under which they labour. There is, therefore, a danger in interpreting Bourdieu for planning practice (through spatial capital or some other mechanism), that planners will be encouraged to pursue an expert-led, 'top-down' approach by perceiving of a largely passive client group of those lacking spatial and other capital. This could focus planners away from the proactive qualities of communities in resisting the practice and outcomes of others' 'spatial capital'. These are very real limitations to be set against the possible beneficial uses of spatial capital in planning practice.

## **Conclusion**

Planning theory, like many other disciplines, is increasingly employing Bourdieu's theory, and therefore developments aligned with it are of note, including the 'identification' of spatial capital. While the article has been used to question the need to add spatial capital to Bourdieu's theory, its planning interest has been on whether spatial capital might, nevertheless, prove a useful trope for planning practitioners. Whereas Bourdieu's work has

mainly been applied to an analysis of planning practice, spatial capital offers up a ready tool for planning practitioners. It might be readily owned by planners with its referencing of the spatial and with recognisable links to social capital which is already 'common currency' in planning and which could travel between the agencies of governance. However, its appeal as a readily available trope is also its danger. As a construct at one step removed from the root theory it is particularly open to all parties to impose their meaning on it. It would not be hard to imagine that, if spatial capital were to come into common usage, it could simply become a shorthand term that loses its analytical purchase or, worse still, comes to be reflected back on disadvantaged communities, just as social capital has sometimes been interpreted to focus on communities as 'lacking' an asset that they have 'failed' to acquire. This directs us to a general critique of Bourdieu's work: that it emphasises the power of the already powerful and the passive role of the weakest, which, transferred to planning practice, might reinforce top-down models of planning focusing on the planner seeking to 'compensate' those with less spatial capital.

Although these are very real limitations there remain a series of potential benefits to employing spatial capital. From a practitioner perspective, spatial capital has potential as a useful tool in developing narratives of place with a socially progressive intent; possibly a reason why it has suggested itself to the authors outside planning who have used it to date. Directly, it could prove useful for planners seeking to narrate the ways in which a series of diverse events can, in combination, produce powerful social advantage and disadvantage. This would allow planners to gain purchase on the combined effects of social actions by, for example, looking at how households are/are not able to vie for school places, are/are not able to exploit connectivity within the city core and between city cores, and are/are not able to claim neighbourhoods as their own. None of these are unremarked events in the city, but

spatial capital can draw on Bourdieu's idea of the homology of fields – how advantage in one field or setting tends to be reinforced by advantage in another – with the same reinforcing mechanism being true of disadvantage. This demands of planners that they seek to understand disadvantage in the city in a joined up way and not focus on a series of events. Spatial capital also has the potential to contribute to a more reflexive practice. Insofar as it directs planners to Bourdieu's work, it opens up planners to the concepts of misrecognition and the symbolic nature of capital (including social capital with which they already engage). Practitioners will already have an awareness of many of the institutional constraints within which they operate. However, misrecognition and the related concept of the symbolic aspect of capitals help reinforce the extent of the subtle nature in which power operates through planning by rendering as natural the choices of different actors. It directs planners beyond the direct limitation of planning law and regulation facilitating a more fundamental questioning of why things are as they are. Finally, spatial capital directs planners to the effects of social agency within place rather than place effects. It facilitates an emphasis on the role of social actors seeking to position themselves within any given place. This could serve as a corrective to assumptions that that getting a place right will lead to desired social outcomes. In this, it usefully draws planners' focus to the actions of people within place alongside the influence of place on people.

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