

<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

What's Up with Cultural Sociology? : from Bourdieu and the Mainstream to 'Productive Weirdness'

Thorpe, Christopher

2022-09

Thorpe , C & Inglis , D 2022 , ' What's Up with Cultural Sociology? from Bourdieu and the
Mainstream to 'Productive Weirdness' ' , Cultural Sociology , vol. 16 , no. 3 , pp. 318-337 . <https://doi.org/10.1177/17499755221112625>

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/355038>

<https://doi.org/10.1177/17499755221112625>

cc_by_nc

publishedVersion

Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.

This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Please cite the original version.



Article

What's Up with Cultural Sociology? From Bourdieu and the Mainstream to 'Productive Weirdness'

Cultural Sociology
2022, Vol. 16(3) 318–337
© The Author(s) 2022



Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/17499755221112625
journals.sagepub.com/home/cus



Christopher Thorpe

University of Exeter, UK

David Inglis

University of Helsinki, Finland

Abstract

What constitutes the field of 'cultural sociology' today? Where has it come from, and where is it going? And how has the journal *Cultural Sociology* played a role in the field over the journal's 15 years of existence? This article comprises a dialogue between one of the current editors, Christopher Thorpe, and one of the founding editors, David Inglis. Reflecting on these questions, the dialogue also touches on major issues in cultural sociology today; these include the continuing legacy of Bourdieu, the presence of Actor Network Theory, differences between critical-theoretical and Yale School conceptions of cultural autonomy, neo-liberalization processes, the status of postcolonial sociological ideas in the field, attempts to decolonize sociological accounts of culture, and the interplay between mainstream and 'productively weird' kinds of cultural sociology.

Keywords

Actor Network Theory, autonomy, Bourdieu, cultural sociology, decolonizing, editors, postcolonial, sociology of culture

Christopher Thorpe (CT): You were one of the founding editors of *Cultural Sociology*, now in its 15th year. In this dialogue, we want to consider both the journal and the

Corresponding author:

Christopher Thorpe, Sociology, Anthropology, Philosophy, University of Exeter College of Social Sciences and International Studies, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4SB, UK.

Email: C.M.Thorpe@exeter.ac.uk

intellectual field of cultural sociology that it serves and contributes to, and how that field has changed over the same timescale.

So, to begin, whose idea was it to set up this journal and to give it such a name?

David Inglis (DI): The idea and the name were suggested by Chris Rojek. As you know, he is a cultural sociologist, among other things, and he was also a publisher at Sage. There was, to my mind, a sense in which this thing called ‘cultural sociology’ was a big and upcoming thing, including in the USA. The publisher was keen for the journal to work in the USA, while being part-owned by the British Sociological Association, and also being rooted in the UK as far as the first editorial team was concerned. The title was selected, at least in part, on the basis that this was an intellectual world that was fast developing and that the title being proposed for the journal was a US-friendly title. Maybe also the title was an alternative to using the phrase ‘sociology of culture’, which is a little more clumsy and certainly has less of a ring to it. So there was an aesthetic reason for the name in addition to intellectual and market considerations.

CT: What do you think would have happened had the journal been called ‘Sociology of Culture’?

DI: I think that in the early days it would have cleared up some confusion as to what the journal was about. In a very simple way, I think that outside of the culturally oriented sociology world, the perception was that this was another cultural studies journal being launched. It would also have meant avoiding the situation that happened sometimes, when some authors, who had received comments to the effect that their paper was not ‘sociological enough’, said that they hadn’t realized how rooted in the discipline of sociology the journal was. I sometimes thought of replying that the clue was in the name: Cultural *Sociology!*

Perhaps the sociological rootedness of the journal would have been more evident had it been called ‘Sociology of Culture’. But that name in turn might have implied the journal was only for what Jeffrey Alexander and Yale School people called the ‘weak program’, and it must also be against their ‘strong program’. The journal was not for or against anything in terms of paradigms. It was definitely *for* good research and creative thinking coming from any paradigm.

CT: What was your aim in founding the journal?

DI: The proposal that Andrew Blaikie and I created for the journal in about 2005 was sent by SAGE, together with the co-owner, the British Sociological Association, to a vast number of people, something like 40 to 50 referees. And I want to say at this point that, in this interview, I’m talking only for myself. Andrew might have very different views.

Everyone had something to add, mainly in terms of what was missing from the proposal! Looking back, I am now slightly amazed that the journal was established at all, given that it had to pass through so many gatekeepers. It reminds me of sociological studies of publishing worlds, where gatekeeping is found to be the key to everything that actually gets published or does not.

I remember being told by one of the chief gatekeepers – a gatekeeper of the other gatekeepers – that some gatekeepers had thought that the proposal for the journal was – quote – ‘pretentious’. That phrase has stuck with me. Why would such a word be used? And why was I being told it so emphatically? The gatekeeper did not have to tell me such a thing or in such a way. Obviously, at the most basic level of academic politicking it was to get at me somehow, as I had taken the lead on writing the proposal text, and in certain circles, I must have seemed like a real parvenu upstart. That phrase, ‘pretentious’, could come straight out of Bourdieu’s *Distinction!*

But more interestingly and of greater significance, I think the phrasing voiced a wider suspicion, coming from certain quarters, of not only a new journal, which seems always to raise resistances from those threatened by something new, but of the field it was meant to serve. The ‘cultural’ in front of the word ‘sociology’ – maybe it makes it sound a little bit precious and overly fancy, to some kinds of ears anyway.

It is amazing what the power of the word ‘culture’ is, to be able to annoy and provoke some sorts of people in some contexts. ‘Whenever I hear the word “culture” I reach for my gun’, as the quotation goes. I have heard a lot of *alleged* jokes about how articles published in a journal with a name like that must necessarily be written in a fancy way. The implication is that they must be too literary and too ornate for their own good.

Of course, if you actually read what the journal publishes, the writing styles vary hugely. Maybe by proposing a journal called ‘Cultural Sociology’, we were doing some sort of unintended breaching experiment, provoking resistances of various types. That makes me think that a good way of mapping out how academic fields work, is to say certain sorts of things and to see what does not go down well in certain wings of the field. Then you understand better what is going on.

CT: Do you have any advice for people setting up new journals?

DI: I have noticed, over the years and in various other contexts than the *Cultural Sociology* one, how much people who run existing journals do not want new journals close to theirs, or apparently close, to appear at all. It’s a threat to perceived dominance. These are the sorts of academic turf-wars that would not have surprised Bourdieu, or Max Weber for that matter. They have almost nothing to do with intellectual aspiration or truth, and almost everything to do with the distribution of power in academic fields.

My advice to anyone setting up a new journal is this. Try to work out well in advance whose toes you will be treading on by just daring to exist. And take into account that there will be those whom you would not have guessed you are somehow threatening, but you will find out sooner or later that the journal’s existence provokes resistances in them, perhaps for unexpected reasons. Be aware too that if you don’t invite certain people onto your editorial board, their dignity will be offended, as they feel that they are so indispensable to the field the journal serves. Even if they turn you down, they feel they should have been asked to the party anyway.

You cannot possibly please everybody, so you might as well just do what you want to do, and then accept the inevitable criticisms you are going to get – the journal is too X, there’s not enough Y, I can’t believe that they have or have not done Z, and so on. In this world, as the late actor Diana Rigg put it, no turn goes un-stoned.

So, you might as well just do your own thing and see how it goes and try to reach out to sympathetic readers who are seeking the sort of material you can provide. That has certainly worked in this journal's case. Many people have told me how the journal appeals very much to their intellectual sensibilities.

A lot of the resistance to the journal melted away, or at least went underground as far as my antennae were concerned, once it had been up and running for a few years. By becoming institutionalized, it became part of the scholarly landscape, and it started to shape the landscape somewhat, even merely by the fact that it just existed. There were Berger and Luckmann sorts of things in action there, I think (see Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Things take on apparent solidity after a while, they become part of the intellectual furniture, and people's relationships to them change accordingly.

CT: So, what essentially was it that you wanted to achieve with the journal?

DI: It was only after the many gatekeepers had spoken regarding the initial proposal that the market research element of it all clarified, and we were able to say things more precisely. That does show that many of the reviewers' comments were good and helpful, and I don't want to suggest they were not. For these kinds of ventures, you need lots and lots of opinions, including the more negative ones, and perhaps especially the negative but not outright hostile ones.

In the terminology of gaps in the market, it had become apparent that the journal was to be 'less and more' simultaneously, in relation to adjacent publications. So, less high theory than *Theory, Culture and Society*, and more empirically and methodologically oriented. At the same time, more theory-driven than *Poetics*, and perhaps less firmly oriented towards studies of cultural industries and analyses of cultural consumption in the light of omnivorousness debates. More explicitly 'sociological' than any of the cultural studies journals, and less exclusively about 'pop cultures', as those journals tended to be about at the time, and certainly less about the author's own critical readings of cultural texts, and more about the sociological study of people, things, and processes.

The ever-growing nature of the field is testified to by the subsequent appearance of the *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* and the *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*. Both overlap with this one, but also have different emphases and orientations too. The more journals there are serving a field, the better. I don't see those as competition. They are allies, strengthening and extending the field.

Anyway, that was the way we tried to situate the journal in the then-existing ecology of publishing outlets. It was only later, once the journal had been running for about 10 years, that someone said to me that *Cultural Sociology* was a middle-range journal, in the sense meant by Robert Merton, of existing somewhere between theory and methods, and theory and data. I rather liked the phrase, and I wished that such a clear phrasing had been available to use and guide the journal right from the start. But it took some years for it to be readable in that way, so for some people it did in fact over time become construable in the way that we had implicitly planned for it to be so understood. There was some external confirmation that it had become what we wanted it to become.

CT: What does the term 'cultural sociology' mean in the journal's title?

DI: In the initial proposal, I struggled – in both negative and positive senses – to say what ‘cultural sociology’ as an intellectual field was, as far as the journal was defining it. I think I wrote that, like many other things in the world, ‘cultural sociology’ is difficult to define precisely, presumably because of the porous boundaries around it, but you usually know an instance of it when you see it. Practitioners recognize it in their practical consciousness, but to get a clear definition at the level of reflective consciousness is quite another matter.

And of course, an intellectual field is formed and re-formed precisely by debates about the nature and referential extent of the name conventionally given to that field. The journal was meant to bring together debates about the very nature of what the phrase ‘cultural sociology’ might mean to different people of variant persuasions.

CT: What about the often discussed, and sometimes controversial or polemical, distinction between ‘cultural sociology’ and ‘sociology of culture’?

DI: I remember saying in the proposal that the journal would serve both ‘cultural sociology’ and ‘the sociology of culture’, even if, or precisely because, some people understand these as very different exercises, even wholly antagonistic to each other. I also said that the phrase ‘cultural sociology’ as the journal understood it covered both sociological studies of things conventionally taken to be ‘cultural’, as well as studies of anything and everything in the world, when those studies played up the ‘cultural’ dimensions of those things, in some sort of sociological way.

So, the animating ideas behind the journal were explicitly about being as open as possible to many different scholarly orientations, but without inviting complete chaos in terms of what was published. Your paper had to be in some sense ‘sociological’, and what that meant was deliberately open to debate and redefinition. And your paper had to be about ‘cultural’ things, or to take a ‘cultural’ approach to things, including those not conventionally understood to ‘be cultural’. The open-ness mostly had benefits, but also some drawbacks, as I see now.

CT: And what were those?

DI: The good side was that the journal did really become plural and polytheistic, to borrow a phrase. That was so in both theoretical, methodological, and substantive terms, as we had wanted. I aimed to get the journal up and running such that people felt that the material they submitted to and that was published in it, would be read without any editorial bias as to methodological or theoretical approach.

There are not many intellectual spaces in the world that are in one way or another *fair*. And it seems to me that to give all sorts of things a fair crack of the whip is an intellectually and morally responsible thing to do. Personally speaking, I have no investment at all as a scholar as to whose paradigm is dominant at any given time. Almost everything has its own value and usefulness.

I really do hope, and I certainly like to think, that very few people have been put off submitting work to the journal because of a perception that the journal does not like certain theoretical or methodological positions, or that it does not take submissions about certain sorts of things in the world.

CT: How does open-mindedness fit with the editor's role in ensuring high quality in what gets published?

DI: Yes, those factors are potentially in contradiction. We know from sociological studies that not everyone likes heavy metal, and some detest it. But heavy metal dislikers should – I am moving into normative terms now – recognize that there are better and worse versions of heavy metal, as of any other kind of cultural product. Likewise, there are better and worse versions of every sort of sociology.

An editor can be, or should be, a neutral arbitrator. The only demand – but it is a very great one – should be that any given paper be as good as possible in its own terms, as long as those terms are not overly narrow. If a paper was a very good version of something I don't happen to like much, my liking or not is irrelevant – in it went to the journal. I think *Cultural Sociology* has succeeded quite well in being, and being seen to be, an open-minded publishing venue. In a multi-player game, you want a fair referee – someone not particularly invested in any particular team or any specific player.

But if in the journal there are in fact negative biases, or too many positive biases, readers should write in and tell the editors about them.

CT: How does the *sociology* aspect figure in *Cultural Sociology*?

DI: The aim of the journal was, and I hope still is, eclecticism within defined limits. That raises the questions of what those limits are, and how to describe them, as well as to some extent how to enforce them.

In my view, what makes something sociological primarily is theory, which is to say concepts and systems of concepts. Lots of disciplines use roughly the same methods. But what makes a sociological approach is what you do theoretically with the data that has been collected by any given method. Within sociology there are very many possible methodologies and methods. And every empirical terrain in the world is potentially open to sociological investigation. Of course, policing goes on too – you are told by gatekeepers, or by a more diffuse conventional wisdom, that you are not allowed to do things that way, or you are not allowed to research that sort of thing.

But still, sociology is defined neither by methodologies and methods, nor by *what* it studies. It is defined by *how* it studies things, and really, it's the theory that communicates to you whether a paper is sociological in some sense or not. So, from the start, we were looking for work that drew upon and contributed to sociological theoretical understandings of things, whether those things were in common-sense ways understandable as 'cultural' or not.

CT: What are the drawbacks of your view and practice of editing?

DI: An open-minded approach is very much connected to the construction and maintenance of a journal as a space of autonomous intellectual production. I'm talking here in the Kantian terms that Bourdieu uses.

The downside of the journal's attempted openness is the risk of intellectual blandness. Open-mindedness can collapse into an overly lax kind of eclecticism. A random selection of different types and flavours of chocolates in the chocolate box, lacking a sense of

having been carefully curated. Maybe the first several years of the journal are retrospectively describable that way. Perhaps we should have policed more the nature of contributions, being a bit more directive in terms of what we wanted to publish, and being a bit less reactive to what just happened to come in. But if we had early on been more tightly focused gatekeepers, then authors might have gotten the impression that the journal was not very open-minded.

In the first five years or so, the only strong gatekeeping in terms of content and approach involved rejecting quite a lot of material that was demonstrably more ‘cultural studies’ in nature than it was ‘cultural sociology’. We wanted to make the point that, for better or for worse, this was a *sociology* journal. To the uninitiated, the differences between the two areas are miniscule or non-existent. But to the initiated, there is a world of difference (Inglis, 2007).

It is interesting that verbal slips – call them post-Freudian if you want – have often been made by sociologists from other sub-fields when talking to me about the journal. Sometimes, in fact quite often, they have called it ‘Cultural Studies’, without realizing the error. Maybe for them the distinction between the two fields was unimportant or made no sense. But those self-defining as ‘cultural sociologists’ would certainly not confuse the two areas. Their professional identities are too bound up with such terminological issues for them to run the two together. It is less important these days, partly because cultural studies is possibly in decline, but when the journal started it was quite common to say that ‘cultural sociology’ was definable only as being *not* cultural studies!

CT: What would you say that the journal supports?

DI: The broad but not shapeless field that the journal calls ‘cultural sociology’!

I would say that as an intellectual space, the journal has not been a cheerleader for any particular school or orientation, but it also has been very respectful of each and every one of them. And it has looked on neutrally while they criticize each other!

Of course, some people prefer their journals to be more partisan. To which I reply: ‘this is a sociology journal, not the *Partisan Review!*’ Then I advise them: ‘Be sure to read the review of Marshall Tito’s partisans on page 45’.

Towards the end of my time as editor – that was after about 10 years of hard labour – I was told by the then-editor of another journal that their journal had a *superior* definition of ‘culture’ to this one. That was an interesting remark – what could the criteria for ‘better’ possibly be? Yet again, such remarks are part of academic jockeying for position, and often done by those who claim that Bourdieu’s account of conflicts and power-games in academic fields is reductive! In fact, it is often all too accurate.

CT: Much of what you have said so far emphasizes the importance of not having a particular drum to bang. But don’t we risk losing what is distinctive about this thing called ‘cultural sociology’ by remaining such a broad church? I mean that both in terms of the journal, and of the area we call cultural sociology.

DI: Yes, probably. But I don’t know what is being lost. I can’t see it, but others presumably can. I should ask around more!

But I do know the problems of defining things too tightly, whether that involves policing what this or any other journal's remit is, or that involves an individual's own personal scholarly practice. Pushing just one thing, or doing just one thing, seem to me types of the over-specialisation of intellectual production Max Weber was worrying about a hundred years ago already.

A personal example. I have over the last few years read a lot about the Aztecs and their empire. When I tell people in sociology about that, they clearly think I am very weird, to the point of perversity. Which I am, of course.

I then have to make myself seem less peculiar by explaining the Aztec investigation is for a comparative study of pre-modern clothing fashion systems. This is a big topic in one wing of fashion studies currently, which of course is a field adjacent to cultural sociology, and which takes some of its major reference points from classical sociology – from Simmel and Veblen and others. And their accounts of sartorial fashion are subjected to postcolonial critique now too.

I searched for material with keywords along the lines of 'sociology', 'culture', and 'Aztecs', and I found that there is almost nothing written – certainly in English, but I think Spanish as well – about the Aztecs from any sort of sociological viewpoint. In the USA, the Aztecs are studied within archaeology departments, and that is logical, given that you have to dig up stuff to reconstruct their social and cultural life. But they are also studied in anthropology departments. So why not in sociology too?

It is not just because they are 'pre-modern' – a dubious classification in itself. Other so-called 'pre-modern' societies are dealt with by historical sociologists, so there is no simple explanation along the lines that sociology is the study of something called 'modern societies'. Why should it be that the Aztecs are not treated by sociologists, but they are by some anthropologists? Who and what created the disciplinary common sense that says sociologists don't study such people, and if they do, those sociologists must be weird?

Reflections on the Aztecs might tell us something about ourselves and society today, as well as being of interest and value in themselves. I mean studying them before the Spanish conquest. Postcolonial sociology would presumably only be interested in them once the Spanish empire had subjugated them, because it seems only to be concerned with what happens after the year 1500 CE, and so in an odd way still ends up privileging the role of Europeans in world history, which is what it says it is challenging (Inglis, 2021; Inglis and Almila, 2020).

Anyway, for highly structured reasons, my attempts at a sociology of the Aztecs is defined as weird by disciplinary common sense. I have had the same sort of response to writings about ancient Greeks and Romans too – too much of a niche hobbyist activity, so the enforced story goes, and why isn't he doing what everybody else is doing? I would prefer that studying the Aztecs sociologically is not defined, or denounced, as weird, but you must subvert such hegemonic defining strategies and say: yes, it's weird, but fruitfully so. It's *productive weirdness*.

CT: How does that scholarly practice connect to the journal?

DI: Ok, returning to the journal after that little excursion . . . As an editor, I read everything that came into the journal. *Everything*. Over more than 10 years. That is

something like about 1300 papers. That was a very good – and in fact, unique – way of keeping abreast of what was going on across the whole field of endeavour called ‘cultural sociology’.

And the patterned nature of intellectual production became very apparent. Just when I thought that the number of papers on omnivores was on the decline, after a year it went back up again! We received, and I read, many papers on what had become the standard topics of the field at that point in history. And there were excellent papers and not so good ones in each of the substantive and methodological genres that made up the field’s mainstream. We published the best of each type. And that was very good, and we served the field as we should have.

CT: What are your favourite articles that have appeared in the journal?

DI: My favourite articles are those that are, as I said, *productively weird*, and I hope that authors sent them to the journal because they recognized a space for creative oddity, nestling alongside very good work that operates in more mainstream ways, or ways that are conventionally defined as normal in the field at a point in time.

The journal must have seemed like enough of an autonomous and heterodox space to attract authors who were writing papers that were productively weird. I really like the fact that such authors chose the journal because they thought that the paper was too weird for comparable journals to accept, but also that sometimes they wrote the paper just for the journal, because they thought it was open enough to consider really – or at least apparently – left-field material.

Unusual papers are not going to get massively cited, and that is an issue when every journal is supposed to increase its Impact Factor all the time, in the manner of increasing all metrics that neo-liberalism demands and which some types of editor seem to exalt in. Publishing the excellent but odd is a small but meaningful autonomous stand to take against neo-liberalization of academia, publishing, and everything else. It is to promote pockets of intellectual freedom of production.

One paper I really love is Ben Merrimans’s (2015) article about duels in 19th-century novels. It is a hugely striking account of novelistic form, ritualized violence, and social psychologies. It exists in an intellectual space that is simultaneously unique, but also has big things to say to established sub-fields and ongoing debates. I hope he does not mind me labelling it as productively weird.

The journal has created a viable space for that kind of work, and hopefully encourages other authors to do similar odd but fruitful things that otherwise may not have seen the light of day, or would have struggled to get past more orthodox and less heterodox gatekeepers, or indeed more neo-liberalized ones, obsessed with impact factors.

CT: Editing is a team effort. After your team had completed a 10-year stint, another team took over. And now there is another team. How do you think that those two subsequent teams have related to the original vision for the journal?

DI: First of all, my team members – Andrew Blaikie and Robin Wagner-Pacifici – were great. Robin did a splendid job of convincing US scholars that the journal was not

just a UK exercise, and that was necessary work then to get the journal a more global and less Anglo-American profile. Then the team based at the University of Edinburgh, who took over from us, did a brilliant job, in many ways. I am grateful to them for both promoting and updating and augmenting the original vision.

In the cases of both teams that came after mine, they were and are pretty eclectic in their theoretical and methodological orientations. You have people who do different sorts of things in different sorts of ways. That is good, as it preserves the non-unitary and open nature of the journal.

The new editorial team is bigger than those that came before it. Inevitably this means more viewpoints having to be arbitrated and negotiated. The interesting thing is the process whereby people of really quite different persuasions over time may come together in a way that is coherent, but not homogeneous or homogenizing, in terms of what gets selected for publication.

CT: Let us now turn to talk about Pierre Bourdieu. You cannot really talk about cultural sociology without reference to this hugely influential figure. And of course, the journal has published a lot of material that is either following, criticizing, or departing from Bourdieusian takes on culture. It is more than 20 years ago now that Bourdieu died. Why do you think his legacy continues to exert such a profound effect over so much thinking within sociology generally, but cultural sociology specifically?

DI: Answer a question with a question: Who is this ‘Bourdieu’ that you are speaking of? There are multiple Bourdieus, multiple constructed public personae called ‘Bourdieu’, created by different sorts of people for more or less tendentious purposes of their own, and mobilized and fought over in overlapping intellectual areas.

CT: To my mind, before we go beyond Bourdieu, we had better be sure we are happy to leave him behind. I think that the overwhelming tendency has been for people to use Bourdieu’s thought as a tool for being critical of various forms of power and privilege. We know all about the ways in which cultural taste, likes and dislikes are used as ‘weapons’, and how cultural tastes about what is ‘good’ culture and what is ‘bad’ culture map onto social inequalities and the reproduction of them.

But I am far from convinced that Bourdieu’s legacy is spent. Indeed, certain aspects of his work strike me as more pertinent than ever for understanding the state of culture under the conditions of neo-liberalism. I am thinking in particular of the notions of ‘autonomy’ and ‘heteronomy’ and their significance for understanding the social conditions underpinning the production of cultural works.

I’m thinking of the Bourdieu who clearly doesn’t believe for one second that what constitutes ‘good’ and or ‘bad’ culture is wholly arbitrary. The later Bourdieu is adamant that in order for great works to be produced, or, at the very least for good work to be produced, the creators of culture need to be able to operate with a degree of autonomy. I am thinking here of late, short works – *On Television* (Bourdieu, 1998 [1996]), *Acts of Resistance* (Bourdieu, 1998), *Firing Back* (Bourdieu, 2003 [2001]), and *The Rules of Art* (Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]).

And yet within the mainstream of the cultural sociological lifeworld, the luxury of autonomy is typically represented as exactly that – a luxury. As something that requires to be dismantled, divided up and redistributed, rather than defended and extended, including in more democratic and inclusive ways.

In a profoundly ironic way, sociologists are some of the worst for what Bourdieu refers to as ‘inverted snobbery’ – the negative disposition towards cultural works, and the social conditions of production necessary for producing them – namely autonomy. Cultural works produced by individuals suitably distanced from economic necessity; possessed of the high levels of cultural capital necessary to produce and decode them; subject matters which appear to require a lot of capital to understand them.

But it is precisely these types of works, and *The Rules of Art* is one, that have done more for sociology generally, and in this case cultural sociology, than any other books that I can think of. And let’s be honest here, *The Rules of Art* could never be described as ‘accessible’ either in terms of the amount and types of knowledge it presupposes from the reader, or the specific nature of its concerns, for that matter.

All of which leads me to say that while one strand of Bourdieu’s thinking appears to have been pursued to its logical conclusion, there remains at least one other strand which has scarcely been acknowledged or explored by sociologists. That’s the strand where Bourdieu sets himself up as the spokesperson for sophisticated cultural works, and the fight to produce and preserve the autonomous conditions necessary for their production. This side of Bourdieu’s work is one that sociologists have been content to pass over in silence . . . because, I think, it belies all manner of value judgements about what is good and what is bad, culturally meretricious and superfluous, and so on, which most sociologists wince at the prospect of having to make.

DI: Perhaps! Perhaps not. In some countries, the autonomy/heteronomy thing is much more to the fore than in others.

Let’s say there are Bourdieu 1 and Bourdieu 2. Bourdieu 1, of the 1960s and 1970s, is operating with the high bourgeoisie as the enemy, who dominate everybody else. Bourdieu 2, which is roughly late Bourdieu of the 1990s and early 2000s, is seeing the enemy as neo-liberalism and its destruction of autonomy in particular cultural fields. These different conceptions of the enemy are incompatible, at least apparently. For defending the autonomy of fields from neo-liberal depredations risks becoming, in part, a defence of established bourgeois privilege and of the most dominant individuals and groups in the fields under attack by neo-liberal forces.

By and large, in cultural sociology Bourdieu 1 stimulates studies of cultural consumption, omnivorousness, and the suchlike. Bourdieu 2 has spawned empirical studies of dynamics in fields of cultural production. But Bourdieu 2 uses an autonomy/heteronomy distinction, to separate out more ‘free’ forms of production from those made under conditions of economic and political domination. That is a Kantian distinction that is elaborated in Frankfurt School critical theory. The autonomy/heteronomy distinction is much less used in cultural sociological studies of fields, in comparison to political economy-influenced media studies analyses of media fields. So, while media studies scholars have often been very keen to talk about the heteronomy of the contemporary media ecology,

people in cultural sociology have been more reluctant to apply that autonomy/heteronomy aspect of Bourdieu to fields of cultural production.

So, there's a whole side of Bourdieusian field theory – the more explicitly political, for autonomy, against heteronomy side – that we can say has hardly been exhausted yet within cultural sociology. The demand for constant novelty in sociology could be seen as a form of heteronomization of scholarly production. But if cultural sociologists are not much oriented towards using the autonomy/heteronomy distinction as a tool to study what they're studying, then they're not going to be as well equipped as they could be to understand the heteronomization of *their own* field of cultural production when it is happening.

If you don't have a clear conception of autonomy and heteronomy, you can't understand neo-liberalization fully, either of what you are studying or of your own conditions of production. It's clear to most people in media studies who the villains are – it is media barons and social media corporations, who are changing the terms of communication in ever more heteronomous ways. But there's no agreement within cultural sociology about who the bad guys are.

As an aside, I should say that there are two big contending views of autonomy in cultural sociology. The first is the post-Kantian one, taken up by the Frankfurt School and Bourdieu, which becomes about the freedom or not to make cultural goods in ways that the powerful do not dictate. Then there is the Yale School one, which asserts the ontological, or at least analytical, autonomy of all 'culture' against 'society', 'economy' and suchlike. Which one you prefer tells a lot about what kind of cultural sociologist you are. Personally, I like both!

CT: Is there something unique to cultural sociology that means it particularly struggles to overcome the influence of Bourdieu?

DI: There are various levels that that can be answered on, some more immediate and apparent, and at least one more long-term and subterranean.

In the first place, Bourdieu was a spoiler – meaning that he pioneered certain things, such that you can't do them yourself now without seeming to be derivative of him. So, if you become a full Professor – I realize that is a privileged situation – and you have to give a formal inaugural lecture, you can't make the sociology of the form of that kind of lecture the subject of your lecture, because Bourdieu already did that in his inaugural lecture! Bourdieu got there before me, in many ways. Maybe many people think that.

Second, he just wrote so much, and on so many different topics. And it has come to seem that he has an intellectual copyright on some of them. So, if you are talking of social class and culture, you have to refer to Bourdieu, according to both the common sense and the policing of the field. Of course, there are non-Bourdieu ways of thinking about those, either existing now or possible in the future, but the general Bourdieusian approach to them remains in the ascendant, and other ways are marginalized by it or smothered.

It's testimony to how much power Bourdieu still yields within cultural sociology that so much collective effort goes into trying to go beyond him! Attempts to go beyond him are always simultaneously part of the process by which his legacy continues to feed into and influence analytical and theoretical attempts at innovation. Yale School cultural

sociology involves a critique of, among other things, Marxism and Bourdieu – they each are said to reduce culture to something else. Actor Network Theory, as put to work in cultural sociology, also involves critique of Bourdieu – he is poor on non-human things. But the apparent undermining of Bourdieu is simultaneously working as a tacit, unintended, and somewhat perverse, reproduction of the presence of Bourdieu. As fashion scholars know, anti-fashion statements are tacit acknowledgements of what currently counts as fashion.

As with all ‘big names’, the ongoing popularity of Bourdieu has a hero-worship aspect to it. Doing a Bourdieu-inspired study of X in some sense provides an alibi for not doing one’s own original thinking.

And Bourdieu’s presence is also continued by the fact that his concepts, and post-Bourdieu debates, can be engineered in ways that one can get research funding by doing such studies, and most scholars are under pressure to bring in external income to their institutions. The Bourdieu-related concepts and debates are, in most countries where this sort of work is regularly done, sufficiently legitimized to allow public and private sector funders legitimately to give people money to study the world in such terms.

As long as the Bourdieu-related money-generating mechanisms exist, his influence in the field will be strong. I wonder what the ‘real’ Bourdieu would think of that? He would certainly be able to analyse the interplay of economic capital, prestige, posthumous reputation, and so on.

CT: And what are the longer-term and deeper reasons for Bourdieu not going away any time soon?

DI: Let me answer that not with direct reference to cultural sociology as such, but to a kind of cultural field that sociology sometimes studies: novels. I read recently one of Umberto Eco’s later novels – *The Prague Cemetery* (2011). Like his other novels, and his academic semiotics, it is of course all about inter-textuality, and how we live within endless sets of signs, all of which refer to each other in constantly spiralling ways.

And I was very struck by how, if you are writing some kind of ironic and parodic self-referential inter-textual fiction today, it is very difficult to do it in a way that is radically different from the way Eco did it. Eco’s most famous novel in that vein is *The Name of the Rose* (Eco, 2004 [1980]), originally published in 1980 at just about the same time as Bourdieu’s *Distinction*, which as you know came out in French in 1979 (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]).

So, just as the meta-fictional author of today labours in the shadow of Eco, so too do many kinds of sociologists inevitably – or seemingly inevitably – operate in the shadow of Bourdieu. This reflection got me thinking that maybe we are still historically too close to the innovations of these different but related author-thinkers to be able yet to escape from them.

Both *The Name of the Rose* and *Distinction* were written more than 40 years ago. In terms of the hyper-driven neo-liberalized cultural system that operates in many countries, 40 years seems like an eternity. But in the broader scheme of things, 40 years might seem like nothing at all. It only seems like a long time if you look at it in a certain way, and that way is most certainly socially conditioned. It only seems like a long time if you’re constantly thinking about emergent intellectual trends and fashions that happen every few years.

So maybe the influence of people like Eco and Bourdieu should be thought about in the light of the proverb attributed to the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai. When he was asked about the consequences of the French revolution of 1789, he reputedly replied, 'it's still too early to tell' (Inglis, 2018). Maybe it is still too early to tell about the consequences of another kind of French revolution, one that happened in 1979!

CT: Overall, why is Bourdieu so appealing to some, and apparently appalling to others?

DI: Another indirect answer. It may also be that something happens in the 1960s and 1970s, with the mutations of structuralism into post-structuralism, that we are still dealing with the consequences of those changes in thinking, and that what was set up then are intellectual logics that are still playing out now, both within cultural fields like novel writing, and also in social scientific scholarly fields too, like sociology in general and cultural sociology as a sub-field within it.

Clearly something very fundamental happens in the late 18th century, even if much of what is conventionally said about the French revolution now seems mythical, and so too in the 1960s and 1970s, such that we are still living out the ways of thinking and experiencing the problems and problematics of the intellectual currents of those decades.

The plausibility of the claim that intellectually we now live in a time of something like 'post-post-structuralism' points to the possibility that we are still living, intellectually, in a period you could call 'the long 1960s'. And that would apply politically too. The kinds of cultural and identity politics and accompanying social movements that arise in the late 1960s and early 1970s are the ancestors of those we have today. The current versions of those drive a lot of academic work, including writings in cultural sociology.

But if we still operate within the epistemic climate of the long 1960s, and if that condition is somehow inescapable for the moment and maybe for some decades to come, that does not prevent the problems of boredom and frustration while we wait for that climate to be altered somehow, or to be overthrown, or to somehow disappear, and for something else to come along that becomes the new cultural and intellectual dominant. I'm thinking in Raymond Williams-style terms here.

Because if we are still existing within an overall structure of thought, both encompassing and existing between structuralism and post-structuralism, an intellectual culture of which Bourdieu was, apparently, a leading architect, then it means until things radically change – and who knows when they will, or, if in fact they can – then we are going to have a great deal of writing that is going to be of a 'normal science' kind. That means an apparently ongoing and endless reproduction of Bourdieu-style studies of the kinds of things Bourdieu studied in roughly the same ways that he studied them.

And while so much of that normal science is totally competent in methodological and empirical terms, it's difficult to arouse great intellectual enthusiasm about it because it's been seen thousands of times before. It's just that the empirical referent of such studies is some specific cultural field, of production or of consumption, in a particular country where that field hasn't been studied that much before.

Perhaps the Bourdieusian worldview will only ever stop once every single thing in the world has been studied from its perspective. We are going to get at some point the cultural field of billiards-playing in Antarctica. Or the distinction games at work in uninhabited islands. Actually, those ones sound quite interesting!

CT: At the risk of sounding tasteless . . . can Bourdieu's intellectual ghost ever be exorcized?

DI: Not yet. Exorcism breeds phantoms, it does not just get rid of them.

A major reason why it is so difficult to reach a genuinely post-Bourdieu state in this field is that *there was no pre-Bourdieu 'cultural sociology'*. Of course, there are pre-histories of both sociological analyses of culture, and of more culturally inflected sociologies. But at the very time that a self-conscious and institutionalised field that conjoins sociology and culture comes into existence, mostly in the 1980s, that is exactly the point at which the Bourdieu of *Distinction* is really making an impact. So, the field and the Bourdieusian influence develop both simultaneously and symbiotically, and each makes the other possible, at least partly. The Bourdieu element became a constitutive and constituting part of the very fabric of the field itself, and that is why it is so difficult to eliminate. Just think how different the field would be if it so happened that Bourdieu had never written *Distinction*, or if he had never become an academic author.

The more something is attacked, the more life – or pseudo-life, if you don't like it – might be pumped into that thing. It is becoming ever more ritualistic to criticize Bourdieu in some manner and then set up your own approach as much superior to the caricature you have set up. Your caricature will probably be a replay of some earlier authors' caricatures.

The ritualized nature of all of this is like what someone once called the annual slaughter of Talcott Parsons in many sociology courses in Anglophone universities of the 1970s and 1980s. That was a rite-de-passage sort of occurrence for students. We have stepped out of the accursed shadows of structural-functionalism, they were told. Now it is that we have escaped the baleful influence of Bourdieu's 'reductionism' and 'determinism'. Then keepers of the Bourdieu flame can come in and say that all these allegations of bad things about Bourdieu are oversimplifications and misrepresentations of a much more sophisticated body of thought. And those defences set off further rounds of critique and counter-critique, which unintentionally keep the name Bourdieu in everyone's minds.

The most grudgingly obvious criticism of Bourdieu is that he was 'a reductionist' and a 'determinist', which are assumed to be Bad Things. Standard criticisms of Bourdieu, or anyone else who has been influential in some area, usually don't get you very far, but maybe standing them on their heads gets you somewhere. I have never read anyone argue that Bourdieu was *not determinist enough*. But that is at least a defensible contention, when made from within a wider and defensible epistemological and political position. I have in fact written that sort of argument, in an obscure text (Inglis, 2013), and it has had absolutely no takers! Only standard critique and counter-critique have purchasers normally. Ideas are only as viable as their audiences make them.

CT: One of the major alternatives to Bourdieu, which is also something some people have tried to make compatible with Bourdieu, is Actor Network Theory. I remember a decade ago or so, Actor Network Theory (ANT) being a particularly hot topic within cultural sociology, not least because it appeared to represent a fundamental challenge to various central assumptions situated at the very heart of the field. And yet subsequently ANT seems not to have had anything like the kind of radical impact that it was imagined back then that it was going to have. Are there any particular approaches in cultural sociology that have failed to develop in ways that you might have otherwise expected them to?

DI: Trends come, trends go. So much of intellectual life is about fashions. When I started in the 1990s, I was told that I was somehow a bad person for not ‘being a post-modernist’, then flavour of the month. But who describes themselves as post-modernist these days? It is a dying or dead form of self-identification, but in some quarters, it used to be huge and *de rigueur*. People who used to call themselves that have found other, newer, more hip self-descriptions.

In academia, many people feel they have to jump onto the Next Big Thing for fear of losing out somehow, or of being derided by others as, literally, *old-fashioned*. So, everyone rushes onto the particular ship that’s sailing, and then precisely because so many people are on it, very quickly it starts to look like old hat, so the more canny intellectual entrepreneurs jump ship and proclaim the next Next Big Thing. You can kind of track that through the pages of the journal, seeing what came in and out of fashion.

CT: And the case of ANT?

DI: As you said, probably 10 years ago we might have expected a greater influence on the cultural sociology field by ANT than has actually turned out to be the case.

I think that’s probably due to a dynamic whereby certain kinds of theory only work easily for certain kinds of empirical objects, or at least are thought by most people to work for certain kinds of empirical subject matters. Most theories are mostly understood in stereotypical ways, and the stereotypes drive the ways in which both the theories are used, and also the empirical objects and domains to which they are applied.

In the case of ANT, it has certainly been taken up within the sociology of art, because if you want to study artworks themselves, and not only what people say or think about them, then ANT gives you a useful and by now legitimated way of looking at – what are thought to be – the objects ‘themselves’.

But outside of the sociology of artworks, ANT seems to have been taken up much less. Perhaps this has been due to the common-sense assumption that ANT is about looking at relationships between humans and objects. That would be artworks in this case, and the support materials that are involved in their display, and so on. Maybe that’s why ANT’s use has been more limited than was billed 10 years ago by its proponents. Maybe it still has more to give, but whatever that is has not been tapped into much yet, as that would involve more unexpected or weird uses of it.

CT: What do you think is missing or under-represented in cultural sociology today?

DI: Gender! Where is the cultural sociology of gender, gendered cultural sociology, or sociology of gendered cultural stuff? These exist but not enough of them exist.

I think it's noteworthy how relatively little there is on gender in cultural sociology. Of course, gender gets dealt with in certain empirical ways, but theories of gender seem not to have penetrated the field enough, as far as I can see. I mean more than ritualistic references to Butler, and so on. Cultural sociology as an area is relatively inattentive to gender, in ways which would in some other fields of sociology be unthinkable. Maybe there is more going on than I know about, but I wonder if such research goes not to journals like this one, and more to journals serving and making up the vast multi-disciplinary mega-field of gender studies.

It's very peculiar that in cultural sociology, gender matters seem to exist more as an empirical variable, dealt with inside wider paradigms, and not more as a set of theoretical categories in their own right. A fully gendered cultural sociology would not operate with gender as one variable among others, but it would somehow build gender matters into the analytical framework in a very deep way.

All this is probably bound up, yet again, with the influence of Bourdieu. You see today very clearly that the wider sociology of class as it is practised in some countries is very connected to the cultural sociology field, precisely because of the shared resource of Bourdieu. In different but connectable ways, in the UK and France, the Bourdieu inheritance has coupled together class studies and cultural sociological analysis. But much less has happened in that regard as far as connections between gender studies, and the sociology of gender, on the one side, and cultural sociology on the other side, are concerned. Bourdieu's (2001 [1998]) work on *Masculine Domination* has only worked in limited ways to connect Bourdieusian sociologies of culture with gender concerns and gender studies, in stark contrast to how massively influential *Distinction* has been, not only in class studies and cultural sociology, but in bringing the two together.

CT: Anything else that is developing, or should be developing, in cultural sociology?

DI: The inter-related trends of decolonizing sociology, both institutionally and epistemologically, and critical 'race' theory and postcolonial critiques of sociology, are going to be the major talking-points for the foreseeable future, as these wider movements gain traction in cultural sociology in the various national contexts, and challenge and change things.

On the advice of a good colleague in the USA, I recently watched Crystal M Fleming's presentation on the 'white supremacy' of and in cultural sociology, available on YouTube.¹ That captures some of what is being said, and how it is being said, at least in the USA. One take-home point is how certain concepts about 'race' and ethnicity tend to get used in cultural sociology articles but not others, and the absences are often of more trenchantly critical concepts. That is an interesting point, both to reflect on and perhaps do proactive things about.

I need to read and listen more, and to think and write more about this. My initial thoughts on some of the challenges, and opportunities, ahead can be found in a review (Inglis, 2021) I did of Ali Meghji's (2020) very well-written book *Decolonizing*

Sociology. In essence, how does an insurgent intellectual and political movement achieve change, without becoming a new dominant and dominating structure, and not just another fashionable enterprise which runs out of steam after a while?

CT: Those movements you mention are in part concerned to deal with the negative legacies of the social past on the scholarly present. You yourself have been insistent on the need for more historically oriented sociology in general, and cultural sociology specifically. In fact, the one and only article you published in the journal was a critique of presentism in social theory, and its effects on other fields, including cultural sociology (Inglis, 2014).

What are your views on the need for more explicitly historical forms of cultural sociological analysis? And how does that relate to your appraisal of decolonizing and postcolonial sociology?

DI: My view is you cannot have really satisfying sociology of any sort unless it is historically informed and historically sensitive. Otherwise, the myths of the current time underpin the analysis, rather than being challenged by it. Historical context is too important for understanding anything at all, that it cannot only be hived off into a sub-field called 'historical sociology', or left only to those defining themselves as professional historians.

Something akin to a Norbert Elias approach to sociology, about how historical processes happening over hundreds of years, continue to have effects today, tend not to figure in cultural sociology at all. And it is noteworthy that Elias-inspired sociological studies do not appear in cultural sociology journals, but they tend to appear in their own specific outlets. That situation is both cause and consequence of Elias not being widely defined as a 'cultural sociologist' when he easily could have been. Elias is not usually narrated as a precursor of cultural sociology, but it was more than possible that he could have been set up as a major figure in the early founding of the field. That points yet again towards the arbitrary nature of canon construction. When US-based 'sociologists of culture' in the 1980s and 1990s created that version of the field that the journal now more broadly encompasses, they did not seem to regard Elias as an important figure. But if the creation of the 'sociology of culture' had been explicitly and self-consciously pioneered in some other countries, perhaps Elias would have been regarded as an unavoidable figure, even if a contestable one.

Still, it's never too late to make up for lost time – or lost history! And although I find postcolonial sociology's historical sensibilities much too substantively, chronologically, and geographically limited (Inglis and Almila, 2020), it may have made more people think about the historical legacies working on contemporary cultural life.

But working and living in Finland has added an extra twist. It is a small country, but with a big sociology community, relatively speaking, and vibrant too. But I think it is conceptually more beholden than necessary to Anglo-Saxon sociology, especially the UK. You have to publish in English, and that reinforces the intellectual stature of those who are native speakers and writers of it. Sociological frameworks are assumed to be something you import from abroad, and only from a narrow range of 'abroads'.

So, today you seemingly have to import ideas about colonizing and decolonizing, of societies and of academic worlds, from the UK and USA, into your country. It's a kind

of willing self-colonization, involving the importing of concepts that were created mostly in Anglo-America. And these tacitly reflect an Atlantic-centred account of imperialism, the imperialism of the former British empire above all.

Postcolonial ideas imported from the Anglosphere have almost nothing to say about the thousands of years of Eurasian empires and colonialism, but Finland lies at the western extremities of Eurasia. And it is surrounded by the former or current imperialist powers called Sweden and Russia, which at different points controlled the country, each deeply shaping its culture. But postcolonial sociology knows next to nothing of those various histories.

So, you end up with the perversity of trying to postcolonize and decolonize things by self-importing, in what comes close to a neo-colonial manner, paradigms, ideas and authors that, when transported like that, from big to small countries, and from intellectual centres to supposed partial peripheries, themselves threaten to become intellectually colonialist, although mostly unintentionally, in this case involving the reproduction and augmentation of the power of the Anglophone academy and powerful institutions and persons within it.

The sociology of sociological knowledge production needs to point out these sorts of otherwise unremarked contradictions. Just like sociologists around the world have sought to create types of sociology not beholden to the Anglo-American and European main-streams, so too should those living in the smaller countries of Europe and other places try to do the same. That would lead to new kinds of cultural sociology, keeping the field fresh in coming decades. I hope this journal can play a part in all that.

Note

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LryN4nqsd8>

References

- Berger PL and Luckmann T (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Bourdieu P (1984 [1979]) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bourdieu P (1996 [1992]) *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu P (1998 [1996]) *On Television and Journalism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Bourdieu P (1998) *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu P (2001 [1998]) *Masculine Domination*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu P (2003 [2001]) *Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market 2*. London: Verso.
- Eco U (2004 [1980]) *The Name of the Rose*. London: Vintage Books.
- Eco U (2011) *The Prague Cemetery*. London: Harvill Secker.
- Inglis D (2007) The warring twins: Sociology, cultural studies, alterity and sameness. *History of the Human Sciences* 20(2): 99–122.
- Inglis D (2013) Bourdieu, language and ‘determinism’: A reply to Simon Susen. *Social Epistemology* 27(3–4): 315–22.
- Inglis D (2014) What is worth defending in sociology today? Presentism, historical vision and the uses of sociology. *Cultural Sociology* 8(1): 99–118.
- Inglis D (2018) Is it still too early to tell? Rethinking sociology’s relations to the French Revolution. *Historical Sociology* 2018(1): 11–26.

- Inglis D (2021) Book review: *Decolonizing Sociology*. *European Journal of Social Theory*. Epub ahead of print 20 September 2021. DOI: 10.1177/13684310211046872#.
- Inglis D and Almila A-M (2020) Sociological masters of the world: For and against 'global sociology'. *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia* LXI(4): 741–769.
- Meghji A (2020) *Decolonizing Sociology: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Merriman B (2015) Duels in the European novel: Honor, reputation, and the limits of a bourgeois form. *Cultural Sociology* 9(2): 203–219.

Author biographies

Christopher Thorpe is Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Exeter. He is an historically oriented sociologist of culture and cultural sociologist. He has written in the areas of classical and modern social theory, cultural representation and cultural globalization. His forthcoming monograph with Routledge comprises an historical cultural sociological account of representations of Italy and the Italians in England, and later Britain, from the Italian Renaissance to the present.

David Inglis is Professor of Sociology at the University of Helsinki. He holds degrees in sociology from the Universities of Cambridge and York. He is currently chair of the Finnish Sociological Association, the Westermarck Seura. He writes in the areas of cultural sociology, historical sociology and social theory. He has written and edited various books in these areas. His current research concerns globalization, cosmopolitanism, (de)civilizing processes, and the sociological analysis of wine, considered historically, globally, and in the Finnish and Nordic contexts.