**Handbook of the sociology of art and culture**

A proposal

EMPIRICAL – CRITICAL – RELATIONAL –CROSSING BOUNDARIES

*Edited by Laurie Hanquinet (York) and Mike Savage (LSE)*

Overview

These last 30 years, the sociology of culture has experienced a massive expansion and constitutes now one of the major areas in sociology. It now forms the largest section of the American Sociological Association. The British Sociological Association has founded a journal devoted to *Cultural Sociology* and the sociological study of art, literature, painting, film, is booming, as evidenced for instance by the high profile which the journal *Poetics* now enjoys. Debates about the persistence and contemporary restructuring of cultural capital and cultural hierarchies in a period of radical social and technical change have experienced a remarkable revival over the past decade. There have also been exciting calls for the need for a lyrical or aesthetic sociology from eminent theorists such as Andrew Abbott and John Levi Martin. Yet currently, the area lacks a defining book which commands the field and can be widely used both for teaching and also for researchers to use as a common resource. Existing handbooks in this area either focus on ‘the strong programme’ of cultural sociology associated with Jeffrey Alexander, in which the culture is seen a very broad ranging way as influencing every part of sociology, or offer a very wide overview of topics and disciplinary approaches to cultural analysis.

The aim of our handbook is to offer a comprehensive overview of sociology of culture, focusing especially though not exclusively on the visual arts, literature, and music, to show the social importance of this area. Relying on a wide range of contributions from highly qualified scholars, we will present not only theoretical but also methodological and empirical debates that cross the field. In discussing all the major issues in sociology of culture, we will show how important this area is to understand the current society in which the notions of lifestyle and cultural resources have become central to understand the making of social hierarchies.

Compared to other handbooks of cultural sociology (*The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, *Handbook of Cultural Sociology*), our book has many distinctive attributes. Rather than defining cultural sociology in a broad and all embracing way, this handbook will mainly focus on the sociology of art and cultural life, in order to do justice to its more specifically aesthetic dimensions – whilst recognising that the boundaries which demarcate art and ‘cultural life’ are both mutable and contested. It will mostly concentrate then on the study of artistic (including literary, visual and musical) production and consumption. It will explore how to interpret people’s lifestyles and where they originate from. Here sociology of culture and sociology of art are meshed together because we want to show the filiation that exists between people’s tastes and the artistic fields. Both share many aspects especially once one also wants to consider the aesthetic dimensions of culture and its social repercussions.

Secondly, we position ourselves squarely within the Bourdieusian debates on cultural capital that have energised new generations of researchers. We position our handbook then as arising out of European debates, in contrast to the American focus of Alexander’s ‘strong programme’ with its affiliation with the Parsonian tradition We see the promise of our perspective as lying in its critique of sociological determinism in which cultural engagement is seen as the simple product of the educated middle classes. We are also mindful of the critique of Eurocentrism and seek to explore the global and cosmopolitan dimensions. We thus seek out contributors from across the world. Linked to that, we will also favour broader approaches in sociology of culture within the humanities, such as art history, TV, film and cultural studies, and history.We will be particularly interested in works that tried to push boundaries between humanities and social sciences in order to unpack the understandings of what culture and art is.

Thirdly, our handbook will particularly pay attention to empirical sociology of culture and the exciting methodological developments which have been championed to analyse cultural relations. A focus of our contributions is to show how empirical research can be enriched through the use of a variety of innovative and sometimes heterodox methods, such as multiple correspondence analysis, social network analysis, the use of digital data, and so forth. We will endeavour to link these to theoretical debates in order to deploy exemplars in how to study cultural consumption and production as well as aesthetic dispositions.

Finally, in our overview of the main debates at the core of sociology of culture, our aim is not to simply expose the main dimensions of the field but also to reflexively reflect upon the roles and the stances sociology of culture should take. The ambition of this handbook is not only to describe the field but also to propose an agenda for its development and new areas to explore. We will therefore privilege the contributions of which aim is to challenge traditional approaches. For instance, this handbook will discuss the relational perspective that has emerged in reaction to reductionist approaches that only explain tastes and cultural activities by the social position. We will show that liking a specific cultural genre (e.g. pop art) does not mean anything in and of itself but can only be interpreted if contextualized within the entire set of people’s practices and tastes.

The different chapters of the handbook will have in common to challenge conventions both in terms of theory and methodology. Our starting point will be Bourdieu’s work on cultural production and consumption which was one of the first attempts to push back the boundaries between humanities and social sciences.

This book has been commissioned by Routledge and we expect it to be published in 2014.

**Organisation of the handbook and contributors**

**Introduction**

This section will explain why this handbook provides a particular insight into sociology of culture. It will give a critical overview of the field and its main evolutions. In this respect, we believe it is important to explain why Bourdieu’s work, and especially his ‘Distinction’, has to be the starting point of the handbook. Bourdieu’s account offers an original view on tastes, cultural consumption and production that still impregnates almost all the works in the field. The main debates that have structured afterwards in sociology of culture (e.g. the omnivore debate) have been developed to refine, nuance or challenge his ideas. We need therefore to give an account of how he has been used and misused, why he has been challenged and what paths he has left unexplored. We show that, if there is much to learn from his relational theory and methodology, quite a few researches have tended to reduce his approach into a more flattened, linear relationship between people’s cultural profiles and their socio-economic background. His approach is also inspiring in so far as it represents one of the first attempts to cross the boundaries between sociology and humanities. However, this has been somewhat left aside in many studies especially in sociology of culture and this handbook wants to put forward those who have also taken the challenge to explore more the aesthetical implications of his theory.

This detour through Bourdieu’s work will enable us to present the general frame of the handbook but also to present new areas of research (e.g. popular culture, new screen culture) that can potentially refresh a field that has become a bit circular. If Bourdieu is central to the European sociology of culture and his heritage cannot but be acknowledged in a handbook of sociology of culture, his omnipresence has also somewhat impeded sociological imagination to bloom. In order to spark the field or to keep it lively, we show that it could be interestingly cross-fertilized by insights into other sociological fields, such as urban sociology.

In the list below we have indicated the authors who would ideally by approached to write the specified chapters, but we might review these choices, hopefully with input from reviewers and the publisher. We are keen to ensure that contributions from all parts of the world are included and will especially seek to include additional Asian contributions.

Each part of the book will have a clear 2000 word introduction by us to frame the contributions. We anticipate 40 commissioned papers, with each paper being 7,000 words each (including bibliography). With the addition of a long introduction and section introductions from us we anticipate the entire book being 300,000 words.

We would anticipate that the book will take two years to produce in its entirety, with a six month preparatory phase of commissioning contributions; 9 months for the papers to be written, and six months of editing.

**Part 1.The debate on cultural distinction**

This first part will discuss the main debates of the empirical sociology of culture. We will start by considering Bourdieu’s influence in sociology of culture and art starting with France, and then tracing how his work has been influential in other parts of Europe, North America, and other parts of the world. We will reflect on the way that Bourdieu’s work spans both theoretical and methodological innovations, and how has it generated powerful and distinctive paradigms in cultural sociology. A particular focus here is the omnivore debate that first emerged in the work of the American Peterson. It attests that Bourdieu’s distinction ‘snob versus slob’ has been losing relevance in favor of a distinction between ‘omnivores versus univores’. It is claimed that the upper and middle classes are characterized by a taste for prestigious art forms but are also more and more seduced by popular culture. Omnivores, interested in a wide range of cultural forms, progressively replace snobs, who focus on the high arts alone.

This handbook will showcase how this substantive debate on omnivorousness has pervaded all the European sociology of culture and to reflect upon the consequences of this influence. We explore how its ability to provide a platform for debate between different (quantitative and qualitative) traditions of cultural analysis both facilitated unusually productive but also limited interventions. The detour by the US through Bourdieu and Peterson’s heritage will enable us to show the common points but also the differences between the American and the European approaches of culture and art. We will discuss a third way that has stressed the importance of an empirical sociological perspective at the individual level through innovative methodology. The final part of this section reflects on the post colonial challenge to conceptualizing cultural relations, with its emphasis on the fluidity and mobility of artistic forms.

We further explore how this debate on distinction has cross fertilised with important methodological developments, involving the use of clustering methods in quantitative research, mixed methods. We focus especially on the appeal of the relational approach that has turned out to be central in sociology of culture, especially following the expansion of social network analysis and, maybe more importantly, multiple correspondence analysis which is typical of the European relational approach.

**1.Bourdieu: an international heritage**

Issues to address:

* Laying out Bourdieu’s distinctive framework for analysis
* Exploring geographical variations in how Bourdieu’s ideas are received and operationalised, and they ways that they clash with other traditions of cultural sociology
* Excavating the importance of Bourdieu’s work for emphasizing the role of relational methodologies

Possible topics and authors:

* *Distinction*, 30 years after in France, Phillipe Coulangeon
* Bourdieu’s influence in the American sociology of culture: Michele Lamont (Harvard)
* The European influence of Bourdieu: Laurie Hanquinet and Mike Savage
* Contesting culture: Bourdieu’s critique of the ‘Strong Progamme’ in Cultural Sociology: Marco Santoro (Bologna)
* Bourdieu as a general sociologist: Craig Calhoun

**2. The ‘omnivore’ debate**

Issues to address

* The possible breakdown of cultural capital, considering issues of class, gender, ethnicity and age
* The ways that cultural hierarchies are being redefined and the reworking of the relationship between domination and culture

Possible authors and topics:

* Selfhood, feminism, and cultural boundaries: Bev Skeggs, Goldsmiths
* Identities, eclecticism, gender and habitus: Steph Lawler
* Measuring the cultural omnivore: Alan Warde (Manchester)
* Omnivorous as disposition: Omar Lizardo
* A critique of omnivorousness? Modesto Gayo-Cal

**3: Migration, ethnicity and cosmopolitan cultural capital**

Issues include

* How the critique of methodological nationalism affects analyses of cultural hierarchy
* The significance of cosmopolitanism for contemporary cultural analysis
* Post-colonialism and cultural hybridity.

Possible authors and topics

* Cultural sociology and the post-colonial challenge: Tony Bennett (Western Sydney)
* Hybridity and culture: Ian Woodward (Griffith, Brisbane)
* The case of translations in the US and in France: Gisèle Sapiro
* Globalization and diversity: Susanne Janssen

**4. New methods in relational approaches to cultural sociology**

Issues

* How cultural sociology draws on innovations in both quantitative and qualitative methods
* How concerns with relationality can be operationalised in social research

Possible authors and topics

* Theory of field: John Levi Martin (Chicago)
* Geometric data analysis in cultural sociology: Henk Roose (Ghent)
* Social networks: Peter Bearman (Columbia)
* Relational method: John W. Mohr (Santa Barbara)

**Part 2. The fabric of aesthetics**

This part will pay particular attention to the different dimensions of the production of aesthetic dispositions in order to explore how modes of art, literature and music can be linked to concerns about hierarchy and cultural capital introduced in Part 1. The first section will focus on different theoretical approaches of the social production of art and culture and reflect on the institutional processes involved in their production. The second section will explore different perspectives in the sociology of art that do not reduce artistic experience to socioeconomic characteristics and that offer a more refined perception of the production of cultural capital.

**5. Production and mediation of aesthetics**

Issues

* What are the social forces producing different art forms?
* What is the sociological significance of novel aesthetic forms?

Possible authors and topics:

* How to become an artist: Nathalie Heinich (CNRS, France)
* Cultural intermediaries in the art field: Nuria Peist (Barcelona)
* Biennalisation: Monica Sassatelli
* Mediation: Antoine Hennion
* Museums: Volker Kirchberg

**6. Aesthetic experience and performances**

Issues

* What novel aesthetic repertoires are being developed in different areas of art?
* How far does the post-modern and performative paradigms require new modes of sociological analysis?

Possible authors and topics:

* Everyday musical performances : Tia DeNora (Exeter)
* Music: David Hesmondhalgh
* Musical taste as performance: Georgina Born (Oxford)
* Aesthetics and politics, Cristiana Olcese (LSE)
* Comedy as an aesthetic experience: Sam Friedman
* Curating Contemporary art: Sophia Krys Acord

**Part 3: The multiplication of symbolic boundaries**

This section intends to reflect on the idea of symbolic boundaries. First, it will discuss how popular culture is being re made and how this might relate to questions of social class, gender, age and ethnicity. This will also involve reflecting on what cultural oppositions are at work in differentiating popular from high culture today. The second section will focus on the increasing importance of virtual cultural consumption and consider its role in the reshaping of cultural hierarchies. This last part will explore the important link between space and culture. The first section will investigate the connections between cities and lifestyles and their implications in terms of cultural capital. The second section will consider the relationships between territorial and symbolic boundaries and the idea of cosmopolitanism.

**7. Rethinking oppositions between highbrow and popular culture**

Possible authors and topics:

* Everyday participation: Andrew Miles (Manchester)
* The multiplicity of highbrow culture: Guy Bellavance (Quebec)
* Cultural dissonances: Bernard Lahire (Lyon)
* Aesthetic capital: Giselinde Kuipers
* Middlebrow book culture: David Carter

**8. Screen, social media & networks and the reshaping of cultural hierarchies**

Possible authors and topics:

* The new screen culture: Olivier Donnat (France)
* Last.Fm, theoretical and methodological implications: Mark Taylor (York)
* Digital sociology: Adrian Mackenzie?
* Media/ Reality TV: Nick Couldry

**9. Cultural capital and the city**

Possible authors and topics:

* Space, habitus and lifestyle: Virgilio Borges Pereira (Porto)
* Cultural capital & territorial identities: María Luisa Méndez (University Diego Portales, Santiago de Chile)
* Chao
* Neo-bohemia: Richard Lloyd

**The Editors**

Laurie Hanquinet is a sociologist specialized in the quantitative analysis of culture. Her main fields of interest are sociology of culture and art as well as social sciences methodology. She has undertaken research on the visitors of modern and contemporary art museums, on the role of artists in the society and on different dimensions of cultural participation. She has collaborated with the Observatory of Cultural Policies of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium) in order to analyse cultural participation in this part of the country. She has also worked on themes such as ethnicity, intergroups relations and immigration and on the operationalisation of these concepts in empirical research. She has published articles in, among others, *Urban Geography*, *Museum and Society*, *Social Science Research*, *Cultural Trends*, and *Sociologie et Sociétés*.

Mike Savage became Professor of Sociology at the LSE in September 2012. Previously he was Professor at the University of Manchester, where he had been Director of the ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC) from 2004 to 2010, and Professor at the University of York, where he founded the European Centre for Cultural Exploration from 2010-2012. He has published over 70 articles (including in *American Journal of Sociology*, *European Sociological Review*, *Poetics, Cultural Sociology,* and *British Journal of Political Science*) and 20 books, with a major focus on cultural sociology, recently including *Culture, Class, Distinction* (Bennett, Savage, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal and Wright, Routledge 2010); *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: the politics of method*(Oxford 2010). He has been Visiting Professor (and Fulbright Scholar) at University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), Sciences Po, and Bergen, and is a Fellow of the British Academy.