

The governance field - a conceptual tool for regional studies

Introduction

The aim of this article is to show how Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice can be used and developed in order to analyse public policy making and governance. Bourdieu was a sociologist who primarily analysed the social field and the cultural field, but also the educational field, art and media. He has been highly influential on research in these fields. But the theory of practice is a tool which may be used also to study other fields. According to the theory, the demarcation of a field and the determination of relevant forms of capital in the field have to be investigated empirically. Thus, it is not possible to transfer Bourdieu's concepts directly to the study of a new field. One has to relate them to the field in question.

Bourdieu's concepts of capital, particularly social and cultural capital, are often cited and used in social science. The field concept has to a lesser extent generated research in new fields not analysed by Bourdieu himself. One notable exemption is organisation theory. Powell and DiMaggio (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991) introduced the concept of organisational fields, which became a point of departure for much empirical work in the neo-institutional tradition. But only recently do we find research which discusses the relevance of all the core concepts in Bourdieu's theory for the study of organisations (Dobbin, 2008, Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008, Swartz, 2008, Vaughan, 2008). I have not found similar attempts in the study of governance and public policy, even if Bourdieu discussed the political and bureaucratic fields in several of his writings.

In what follows, I will present the main concepts in Bourdieu's theory of practice and discuss the way he uses the concepts. Then I try to develop these concepts in order to make them suitable for analysis of public policy making and governance. I introduce the concept of a governance field, which I argue leads to a more suitable demarcation of the field than Bourdieu's concepts of a political and a bureaucratic field. I discuss what forms of capital which are the most relevant to understand the positions and struggles in the governance field. In the last part of the article I utilise the revised framework in an empirical analysis – taking regional reform in Norway as my case.

Regarding my method in this article, I have no ambition to build an analysis of the governance field from scratch. My method is to compare and confront Bourdieu's concepts and analyses with concepts and theories developed in the contemporary literature on public policy and governance. Bourdieu himself did rarely discuss his concepts and theories in their relation to other researchers' work. When he did so, it could be in a rather polemically way. But I will argue that we can gain a lot by comparing the framework created by Bourdieu with the concepts developed by other researchers, as it has been done by Martin and Benson (Martin, 2003, Benson, 2006) among others. In the presentation of the case study, my primary ambition is to explore the way one has to think relationally in order to analyse a field as establish the connections between structures and strategies.

The theory of practice

Bourdieu's theory of practice was originally developed as a tool for his anthropological studies in Algeria (Prieur *et al.*, 2006). He elaborated the theory in several works through a long career as a social scientist (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1993, Bourdieu, 1995b). The theory can best be accessed through a discussion of its core concepts, habitus, field and capital.

Habitus is the concept Bourdieu developed to explain how structures shape practice. He claimed that practice is neither totally free nor totally determined by social structures. Most of the actions of social agents are neither pure ritual acts nor pure strategic acts (Bourdieu, 2005). The concept of habitus is coined to overcome this dualism, inherent in most theories of social action. We are disposed to act in certain ways through a deep socialisation. But we are not totally structured, we act in relation to the structures which surround us. On the other hand, we are not free to choose in a way that makes our actions steered by purely strategic calculations.

Habitus is a socialised subjectivity. The field structures habitus, which may be considered as the embodiment of the force exerted by the field. But at the same time the relation between the habitus and the field is a relation of knowledge, or cognitive construction. Habitus makes it possible to constitute the field as a meaningful world. Habitus is what one must assume in order to give meaning to the statement that social agents are sensible even if they are not rational in the sense of calculating (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1993):115. A spontaneous adaptation of habitus to the field is only one of the possible forms of action, even if it is the most common (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1993):117.

Bourdieu's concept of strategy is different from the one found in theories of rational and maximising actors. By strategy he means objectively oriented lines of action, which social agents construct in their practice and from the practice. Strategies are defined in the meeting between a habitus and a particular conjuncture in the field. It follows that what values and goals an actor pursues in his actions, have to be interpreted both from the particular situation and from the actor's socialisation. Thus actors may be reflective in relation to their own situation, even if much of our practice follows simpler strategies.

The concept of habitus is the most disputed element in the theory of practice. Bourdieu claims that he through this concept is able to transcend the division between subjectivism and objectivism in the social sciences. By objectivism or structuralism he means explanations which see the individual as determined by supra-individual structures. By subjectivism, which he also labels constructivism, he means explanations which claim that individual action is the product of will and individual motives.

With the concept of habitus, Bourdieu places himself within the great debate on the relation between structure and action, a theme which has occupied the great sociologists from Weber (Weber, 1971) and his distinction between understanding and explanation, via Parson's role theory (Parsons, 1937, 1951) and Giddens' theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984) to Habermas' formula interpretation and reconstruction (Habermas, 1990). It is beyond the scope of this article to enter that debate. But Bourdieu has been read both as reductionist and determinist (Alexander, 1995), critical realist (Potter, 2000) and a representative for social constructivism (Taylor, 1993). Bourdieu himself has often been unclear in this matter, particularly when he polemically places his own position. A discussion of what his position "really" is can easily be unfruitful. But I will argue that his position is compatible with a soft

variant of social constructivism. By this I mean a constructivism which claim that we only can interpret the world through our linguistic constructions, as opposed to a “hard” constructivism which claims that the world is a product of our constructions (Hacking, 1999).

Of recent work on governance, Jessop’s strategic relational approach (Jessop, 2001, Jessop, 2004) comes closest to the ambitions and the problematic in Bourdieu’s theory. Inspired by Poulantzas’ (Poulantzas, 1978) notion of the state as a complex strategic relation, Jessop explores the place for subjectivity and strategic action in a structured world, and his perspective is recently used by Lagendijk (Lagendijk, 2007) to analyse the construction of regions.

Fields and field analysis

According to Bourdieu the field is an open concept, made to be used empirically in a systematic way. He rejects to give a general definition of a field. A concept has no other definition than what it gets within a system. What he does say, is that thinking in field terms is to think relationally. What exist in the social world are relations, not interactions or inter-subjective ties between the agents, but objective relations which exists independent of individual consciousness and will. Analytically, a field can be defined as a network, or as the relation of objective connections between positions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1993):84. But this network can not be understood as the aggregate of interactions between the elements of the network, in the way theories of social networks view networks as the sum of connections between the agents.

By using an analogy to field theories in physics, as theories on magnetic and electrical fields, Martin (Martin, 2003) illustrates how field theory permits explanations which are neither mechanical nor functional. Theories of mechanical causation are based on a cause which creates an effect, and the effect changes when the cause changes. But in field theory, it is the interplay between the field and the state of the elements in the field which creates change. A magnetic or electrical field creates movements in the particles in a field even if the field itself does not change. One can say that the magnet causes the field. But only indirectly – through the field effect – are the magnet causing the movements of the particles.

Bourdieu rarely discusses the connection between his own concept of field and the way other social scientists use it. But Martin (ibid.) distinguishes between three different variants of field theory in social science. Field theory has been used in the gestalt strand of social psychology – to show how our perception is not performed bit-wise, but becomes meaningful because each new element is related to a whole. Further, field theory has been used in the study of organised struggles within a societal field. This is where Bourdieu has made his contribution, by showing how the combination of economic and cultural capital structures the social field (Bourdieu, 1995a). Lastly, the field concept is used in the study of institutionalised fields, particularly how organisations are structured by their relations to an organisational field. But Martin views the focus on fields and relations as potential useful also for other kind of trans-institutional relations than those between organisations, an idea I will follow up here.

In several connections, Bourdieu uses game as a metaphor to explain what goes on within a field. In the field, agents play according to rules which are not codified and explicit. By participating in the field, the players accept that it is worthwhile to play the game, and they become captured by the logic and the rules of the game. The relative strength of a player, his

position within the game field and his strategies are dependent upon both the total volume of his assets and the structure of assets – how they are distributed among the players.

But social games are different from table games in the sense that social games are not only played according to the rules. A part of social games are about the rules themselves, what kind of rules that should be considered as legitimate and binding. A social game is simultaneously a game defined by the rules of the game and a meta game about the framing of the rules.

When do we know that we have a field, and when does an agent belong to a field? Since the field is constituted by relations between positions, we can say that we have a field when a set of elements are connected in such a way that we can make a parsimonious explanation of the state of the elements by means of the relations they have to each other. When field thinking has explanatory power, we are confronting a field (Martin, 2003). Bourdieu says that an agent belongs to a field when the field is affected by the actions of the agent (Bourdieu, 2000):61. This kind of definition is close to the tautological, but is also open to new empirical findings.

The field concept is tied to the idea of a differentiation within modern societies. Different fields are shaped by different logics. Bourdieu says that in the economic field, business is business. In the field of art, however, economic success is not accepted as a dominating goal or a criterion for the quality of a piece of art. One has to reconstruct the game in a field based on its' particular logic. One of the advantages of the field concept is that it facilitates comparisons of different fields and the way they work.

Regarding the analysis of a field, Bourdieu says with a borrowing from Spinoza (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1993):90 that the space of objective positions and the space for taking of positions must be analysed together and be treated as two translations of the same sentence. There are three connected element in a field analysis. The first is to establish a structure of positions where the agents or institutions in the field are placed or taking place in the positions. The second is to analyse the habitus of the agents: what dispositions have they acquired and how are they acting strategically from their positions in the field. The third element in the analysis is to place the field in relation to the wider social field. How autonomous is the field, and how it is influenced by the forces in the field of power. The field of power is Bourdieu's concept for the field of agents with high amounts of capital. He prefers to speak of a field of power and not a ruling class.

The forms of capital

Some commentators seem to perceive Bourdieu's concept of capital as synonymous with resource. Bourdieu, however, underlines that a resource is not yet a capital. To work as a capital, a resource must be recognised a something that is worth to strive for in the games of a field, in other words capital needs to contain a symbolic value.

A capital does not exist and does not work except in relation to a field. The capital exerts a power over a field. It is the distribution of this power that constitutes the structure of the field, and it exerts a power over the rules which define the way the field functions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1993). The relative value of different forms of capital varies from field to field. Some forms of capital are valid and effective in several fields. In the discussion of particular fields Bourdieu mentions many forms of capital, and he does not always make the relation between them clear. But his most famous analyses are based on a discussion of how economic

and cultural capital works together in the constitution of the social field (Bourdieu, 1995a). The medium for the economic capital is money. Cultural capital exists in three forms, which are the embodied (internalised), the objectified (externalised) and the institutionalised form (Bourdieu, 1979). Knowledge, a book and a school certificate are examples of the three forms.

Another important concept of capital is social capital (Bourdieu, 2001). Bourdieu perceives social capital as the sum of resources connected to a stable network of relations built on reciprocal recognition. The amount of social capital belonging to an agent is dependent on the extent of the agent's network and the capital belonging to the other agents in the network.

The fourth key form of capital is symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu symbolic capital is a transitional form for other kind of capital, in the way that it involves habitus (Bourdieu, 2001):111. Properties of a capital are transformed to symbolic capital when social agents equipped with perception categories are recognising them and attributing them a value (Bourdieu, 1995b):97. Symbolic capital exerts power in three ways (Bourdieu, 1991). Firstly, it structures our knowledge of and our construction of the world. Secondly the symbolic capital, in its form as culture and language, produces social integration. Lastly, the juridical capital is an objectified and codified form of the symbolic capital.

When the agents in a field possess different forms of capital and varying compositions of capital, some of the struggle between the agents will revolve around the exchange rate between the forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1995b). The exchange rates may be codified through administrative measures, and much of the struggle over exchange rates is struggle over the exercise of state power. As an example, the state may regulate the access to educational certificates and thus the value of the titles for the agents. A certificate with low supply becomes more valuable, raising its relative exchange rate.

Before I discuss the specific forms of capital that are relevant for the analysis of public policy and governance, I now turn to a discussion of the demarcation and the particularities of this field.

The governance field

When Bourdieu discusses politics and governance, he refers to the political field and the bureaucratic field. In his analyses of the political field (Bourdieu, 1981, Bourdieu, 2000) he considers the political in a narrow sense, with emphasis on the relations in and between the parties, the electorate and the political institutions. Through the mechanism of representation, a division between the professionals and the common people are produced and reproduced. This division must be understood as historically created, as a part of the genesis of the political field. There are social prerequisites for political participation, and there are differences in participation between social classes. Another particular trait of the political field is that it has to receive its legitimacy from those who mainly are situated outside the field, through an appeal to the common citizens. The citizens influence parts of the power relations in the political field through their votes.

Bourdieu's analyses of the bureaucratic field turn mostly around the genesis of the state and its reproduction of power relations through different branches of the state apparatus (Bourdieu, 1995b, 1996). While the political field is structured around the struggle for

political power, the bureaucratic field is the field for reproduction of power relations, and also for the state's steering of society.

There are some good reasons to make a distinction between the two fields. On the other hand, the distinction can contribute to an image of political struggles and decision processes as belonging to a phase in advance of and relatively autonomous from governance and implementation of political decisions and solutions. The professional politicians take the decisions on behalf of the people, the bureaucrats implement. In political science, this is some times labelled as the image of a parliamentary "steering chain". But most contemporary theories of public policy-making shows that policy making and implementation are intertwined in more complex ways than what is suggested by the metaphor of a steering chain. Policy making and implementation are two moments of the same process, and they are not separated. Within a policy sector, we can observe institutionalised patterns of interaction. The agents in this interaction are both politicians, bureaucrats, experts, representatives from interest groups and media. Since they participate in the same game in an institutionalised setting, they are positioned vis-à-vis each other in the way that characterise a field. The agents interact across institutional borders, and sector is a more important concept than institution if we are going to demarcate a governance field or subfield.

Several concepts have been proposed to describe this kind of field (Heclo, 1978, Olsen, 1978, Jordan, 1981, Marin and Mayntz, 1991, Rhodes, 1997). Policy communities, segmented state, policy sub-systems, iron triangles, issue networks and policy networks are all concepts developed in order to transcend the institutionally confined conception of a political or bureaucratic domain or field.

The mentioned concepts show both similarities and differences. A common trait is that they view the participants in a sub-system as oriented towards problems and issues within the sub-system, to the degree that they evaluate policies and action alternatives mainly through their consequences for groups and interests within the system. Thus, the concepts also contain an assertion that public policy making is fragmented.

It varies to what degree they view the sub-systems as stable and dominated by certain groups of agents. The theories on policy segments and iron triangles maintain that this is the case, while issue networks are considered as more unstable and varying from issue to issue. The literature on policy communities and policy segments maintains that the participants in a sub-system develop common values and attitudes, and that trust works as cement within the segment or community. Policy network theories are more open for variation in the forms of interaction. The interaction can be characterised by competition, negotiation and exchange, or also by common values and reciprocal trust.

At the more overarching system level, cross institutional interaction has been described through concepts as corporatism, partnership and governance. Corporatism labels the cooperation between state and interest organisations in policy making and implementation. Partnership refers more generally to co-operation between public and private actors, while governance often is used even more generally, about steering in a multi-actor system.

If we take the described development of new concepts and the attempts to catch a reality which lie behind them seriously, it becomes problematic to discuss policy making and implementation based on a division between a political and a bureaucratic field. It is more relevant today to describe the field as a governance field, where both politicians and

bureaucrats are actors in different positions. By this, we acknowledge that the governance field crosses institutional borders, and that policy making and implementation are intertwined processes.

For some purposes, it may be meaningful to view the political and the bureaucratic field as sub-fields within the governance field. But an important point in the theories of policy networks, communities and segments is also that subfields within the governance field often develop around policy sectors. The demarcation of such subfields must be described through an empirical analysis, taking into account the historical development of the field. An important question in the demarcation of subfields is how autonomous they are in relation to the overarching governance field, other subfields and the social field in general. Another set of questions relate to the actors in the field: who are they, and how stable is their participation? We must also approach the game in the field: what are the relevant forms of capital and the strategies of the agents? How are the agents positioned in relation to each other? And what kind of rules or regularities structures the game? What kind of logic do the actors follow – how do they define the game?

Among the concepts mentioned above, the concept of policy networks comes closest to the analytical openness demanded by Bourdieu. Bourdieu mentions that a field in analytical terms can be defined as a network. But he continues “that means as the internal relationship shaped by objective relations between positions” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1993):82. In the literature on networks, we can find a division between mainly case-oriented studies of policy making and quantitative studies of social networks. The last kind of studies constructs the network structure based on empirical data about interaction. But Bourdieu do not find it satisfying to think about a field as structured by this kind of inter-subjective ties. He stresses the need to understand the structure of objective positions within the field, and to integrate this with an understanding of how the agents act strategically related to the position they inhabit in the field: to keep their position or to change it. Positions can be superior or subordinated in relation to each other, they can be in balance or in a dynamic movement, and they can be coordinated or competing. This is the kind of relations Bourdieu puts in focus, and the way we have to think and analyse if we are going to use the concept of governance field to study the governance field and its particular subfields.

Capital in the governance field

I will argue that it is possible to develop Bourdieu’s ideas about political and symbolic capital by comparing them to and borrowing from recent work on public policy analysis and governance. Particularly, neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991, Scott, 1995, Peters, 1999) and analyses of public policy as strategic games in institutionalised contexts (Ostrom, 1990, Scharpf, 1997, Sabatier, 2007) seem to be useful in this respect. I will now turn to a discussion about how Bourdieu’s concepts can be developed and enriched in details through a comparison with this kind of theory.

Bourdieu views the state as the result of a process with concentration of different types of capital (Bourdieu, 1995b). States concentrate the physical power, or the capital of power instruments, through the organisation of armies and police forces. This echoes the common theories about the genesis of the state, from Weber via Elias to Tilly. But the state also concentrates economic capital through the organisation of an effective tax system. Bourdieu says that the organisation of the tax system is related to the genesis of the state’s physical

power through a circular causal relation. To keep an army the state needs money, and to collect money the army is needed.

The state also represents a concentration of cultural capital. Bourdieu mentions the concentration of informational capital, through categorisation and collection of statistical data, as particularly important. Additionally, the state represents a concentration of symbolic capital. In his studies of the academics and the educational institutions, he points to how the state certifies and reproduces symbolic power through the educational institutions.

The concentration of different forms of capital gives the state a kind of meta capital, which endows the state a power against other capital owners, and particularly over the exchange rate between the forms of capital. We can talk about a field of power where the possessors of different forms of capital are fighting, particularly about the power over the state.

The juridical capital is an objectified and codified form of the symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1995b):98. The state's legitimate right to give laws has its own genesis, which finally leads to the state's right to judge all its subordinates. Bourdieu views the juridical capital as a specific, codified form of the symbolic capital – a form based in rules which may be enforced by the means of physical force. In his essay on symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991), he divides the symbolic instruments into instruments of domination, structured structures (like language or culture) and structuring structures (instruments for knowing and constructing the objective world). Building on this, we can probably distinguish between a cognitive, a normative and a juridical form of the symbolic capital inherent in Bourdieu's discussion of symbolic power. Structuring structures points mainly to the cognitive form of symbolic capital. Structured structures refer to values and norms, in Bourdieu's expression to culture. The juridical form corresponds roughly to instruments of domination. But this way of viewing forms of symbolic capital is blurred by Bourdieu's inclination to include ideology as part of the repressive apparatus and not as a form of values or norms.

Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power shows clear similarities to the more sociologically oriented versions of neo institutional theory. Scott (Scott, 1995) makes a distinction between what he calls the three pillars of institutions. According to Scott, institutions create a social order through three different institutional forms. These are the regulative, the normative and the cognitive pillar. Regulative institutions work through rules, laws and sanctions. They are legally sanctioned, and correspond to the juridical capital. Normative institutions reach compliance through social obligations, and are legitimated through shared norms and values. They correspond to the structured structures in Bourdieu's language, as the cognitive institutions correspond to the structuring structures.

Through a comparison like this, we can connect Bourdieu to the institutional turn in social science in general and utilise insights from institutional theory in analyses of the governance field. Bourdieu uses the concept of symbolic capital both in an including way, seeing juridical capital as a form of symbolic capital, and in a narrower sense where it is a label for the normative and the cognitive capital taken together. My suggestion is that we talk about symbolic capital only in the narrower sense, viewing normative and cognitive institutions or capital as forms of the symbolic capital. Symbolic capital in the wider sense can be replaced with a concept lacking in Bourdieu's writings: institutional capital. As Bourdieu understands the concept, symbols are also institutions. We could also talk about the regulative capital as identical with the juridical capital – the objectified and codified form of the institutional capital.

The strength in Bourdieu's perspective lies in talking about capital and not about pillars of institutions. In this way, he does not reduce institutions to static frames which are restricting actions. Understood as forms of capital the institutions are resources for the agents in a field. At the same time, they can be considered as restrictions for action and potential change objects for strategic actors.

Another important key to understanding the forms of capital which are present within the governance field can be found in the discussion of politics as a double game (Bourdieu, 2000). At one hand, politics is a game about policy-making, at the other hand it is a game about ideas. The struggle about the ideas is also a struggle about which dividing lines that will be important within a field. Different ways to define the political struggle produces different dividing lines. If one says that the conflict of interests is between the rich and the poor, one produces another division than if one maintains that the conflict of interests is between the French and the foreigners. The struggle over ideas within the political game is also a struggle about political mobilisation. And it is decisive in the process of determining the relevant solutions to the cases in question, because the struggle over ideas structures what is seen as the important content of the cases.

That is why the struggle of ideas also is a strategic fight, a fight to define the game in a way that increases one's own political capital. And in the struggle about ideas, language is not only a neutral means of communication. Language is used strategically. The agents consider the markets for the ideas to be uttered and the way to utter them (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991).

This double determination of the political game, as a game about ideas and a game about cases, is also important if one wants to understand what forms of capital that are relevant in the political field. Forms of capital which are crucial in the definition of relevant solutions and make them appear as legitimate are important forms of the "idea capital". Expert knowledge is one such form of capital. Another form is what Bourdieu labels the information capital (Bourdieu, 1995b). The state collects information, processes it and spreads it again. The categories which are constructed during the collection and registration of information structure the way we think about phenomena in the society, and thus become a source for the creation of cultural capital. The state creates unity in the cultural market by the structuring of all kind of codes – juridical, linguistic and metric – and through the creation of unitary forms of communication. In his works on the genesis of the state, Bourdieu discusses the state's contribution to reproduction of power relations more than the mechanisms facilitating change and the potential for change. But in other parts of his work he touches politics as visions and striving for change of ideas (Bourdieu, 1981, Bourdieu, 2000). Solutions to political questions can get legitimacy through appeal to values and political ideologies, either those values point to the common good or they play on identification with certain groups.

I do not find Bourdieu particularly clear about how to place informational capital and knowledge capital in relation to the concept of cultural capital. He seems to view them as forms of the cultural capital, but forms that are specific for the political and the bureaucratic fields. In my opinion, it can be more convenient to distinguish the forms of capital which are relevant in the game about ideas with a separate concept. The game where proponents of political ideas struggle for their legitimacy is a discursive game. We can underline this by viewing the knowledge capital and the informational capital as forms of a discursive capital.

I view the discursive capital as closely related to the other forms of capital which are mobilised in the governance game. But it is distinctive in the meaning that it is structuring the game and creating the dividing lines. That is why it can be illuminating to consider the discursive capital as a separate dimension of capital, not only as a dimension of the political capital. In a similar way as the social field is structured by both economic and cultural capital, the governance field is structured by discursive capital and political capital. In this way we give political capital a restricted content, as a form of capital which is particularly relevant in the struggle about particular issues.

Bourdieu has not so much to say about what resources or forms of capital that are relevant in the struggle about the issues after the relevant solutions are defined. He comments that the strength of an agent is dependent both on the strength of his party and his position within the party. Using a metaphor he also says that the party is a bank and the secretary general a cashier (Bourdieu, 2000):65. Another place he says that the political capital has a symbolic character and that reputation is important for the creation of political capital. These remarks do not take us far.

But now we are approaching matters which are more systematically treated in some of the game theoretical approaches to public policy analysis. I find Fritz Scharpf (Scharpf, 1997) particularly interesting here, because he makes an attempt to classify the games which “real actors play”. He talks about four typical game forms in a policy making context. These games are hierarchy games, majority voting games, negotiations and unilateral actions. A developed theory about forms of capital in the governance game will have to take into account that these types of games are structured in different ways.

As an example, majority voting games are based on voting capital, or electoral capital. Additionally, they are based on capacity for alliance building, which partly follows from the agents’ positions in the field and partly from the social capital they are able to mobilise inside and outside their party. This kind of game is also structured by decisions rules and other rules which can be considered as part of the regulative capital. On the other hand, economic capital can not be directly converted to political capital in a voting game. To buy votes will be considered as corruption, and deemed illegal. Another matter is that economic capital can have indirect effects, for example through lobbying.

Negotiation games, to take another example, follow another kind of logic. In this kind of games, economic capital can be directly deployed and exchanged with political capital, for example in negotiations on localisation of a business. In hierarchical games, regulative capital and authority will play a more important role. But also in hierarchical games, subordinate or local agents can not be reduced to merely tools for the central power. The subordinates may possess the bulk of the informational capital in an implementation game and thus be able to promote their own interests.

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss further what kind of capital are relevant for different forms of games in the governance field, This have to be developed through empirical analyses of the game forms in the field. In the last part of this article, where I present a case study, I will discuss a case where a simple voting game is central.

Case study: Regional reform in Norway

At least for fifteen years, regional reform has been a prominent issue on the political agenda in Norway (Bukve, forthcoming). Three succeeding commissions have delivered white papers concerning the structure and tasks at the regional level of government. All three recommended a structural reform, replacing Norway's 19 counties with bigger regions. But so far, no major reform has come out of all this activity. The most probable outcome in the foreseeable future seems to be a slight reduction in the number of counties, from 19 to 14 - 16.

Considering the tasks of regional government, the most conspicuous change during the last decades is the reduced responsibilities of the counties, particularly in health care and business support policy. Interesting enough, this has been accompanied by a rhetoric praising the counties as the most important regional development actors.

This brief outline leaves us with one big question regarding the issue of regional reform in the Norwegian setting. Why has regional reform failed in spite of the many proposals for change? I try to reach an answer to that question studying the reform issue as embedded in a field where the actors are positioned in relation to each others and where they dispose of different kind and amounts of capital. Institutional, discursive and political capital is most important in this case. The field relations and capital structure shape the setting where the agents follow their strategies in order to get certain ideas and solutions accepted.

The field and the players

The regional governance field can be considered as a distinct subfield within the Norwegian governance field. Regional governance and policy is the responsibility of the Ministry for Local Government and Regional Development. Around this Ministry, we can find a policy sub-network consisting of bureaucrats at the national, regional and local level, politicians at the same levels, the Association of Local and Regional authorities, business associations, researchers and consultants, a few specialised journals and newspapers and selected journalists from the bigger media. These players are following their strategies inside the organisations where they are assigned formal roles. But they are also networking across organisational and institutional borders, trying to influence issues and the development of the field.

The regional governance field has to be considered as a semi-autonomous field, open for influences from other fields. In the case of regional reform, it is potentially open for agents in any sector and any government level who can be affected by a change in the governance structure. Therefore, one has to take into account to what extent agents more or less external to the regional governance field get involved in the game. This will of course depend on the way the decision process is organised, or how the institutional capital is working.

Positioning the players – the effects of institutional capital

The institutional capital present in the regional reform game is primarily of two types. Firstly, there is the regulative or juridical form of the institutional capital. This form of capital gives the actors a more or less central role in the formal decision process. Secondly, there is the normative or symbolic form. This form expresses the dominant ideas concerning the issue at stake.

If we first consider the regulative capital, the legislature at the national level has the constitutional powers to decide upon the structure of the governmental apparatus and the task division between government levels. Norway is a unitary state, where local and regional tiers of government are assigned their powers by the national state. This means that the focal point of reform ambitions is a decision in the parliament (*Storting*). The typical reform process begins with a government decision to consider an issue, and a government commission is appointed and given their terms of reference. The commission will usually draw upon researchers or other experts and often give external experts the task to elucidate some aspects of the issue. When the commission has given its' report, the next step usually is a report from the government to the *Storting* and a parliamentary discussion. During this discussion, there may be unity or conflicting views among the political parties. A wide range of players may get activated in the process. If the government proposals are of a kind demanding a new act, a bill is passed as the last step in the procedure. This procedure will be supplemented by hearings of relevant parties in the case. In the case of regional reforms, at least the counties, municipalities and the National Association of Local Authorities will be among these parties. The distribution of regulative capital thus places most of the power with the cabinet and national politicians in the parliament. But is also constitutes the game as a multi level game, involving actors at different territorial levels.

In the regional reform game, we actually find a wide range of players. But if we take into account the regulative structures, we can assign them different positions in the field. The players belong to at least at three different territorial levels. Actors at the local government level, the county level and the national level are all present. Outside the state apparatus, the political parties, experts, business associations and media are important actors. Local and regional governments are also members of associations which have played active roles in the reform processes.

The game is structured as a majority decision game where the players can use the relevant forms of capital they dispose of. Since Norway has proportional elections and hence a multiparty system, several political parties take part in the decision process.

If we consider the normative form of the institutional capital, the most striking fact is the increasing importance of neo-liberal values in administrative reforms. Traditionally, the debate on local self government is turning around the tension between the values freedom, equality and democracy. There has been a polarisation between a socialist position where equality is the most important value and a non socialist position where local freedom has been considered the most important. The proponents of equality have defended state intervention in municipal and regional affairs in order to build a welfare state based on universalism and equal services for everybody. The proponents of freedom have defended the right of the local and regional communities to decide in their own matters without too much interference from the state.

During the decades following World War II, the builders of the welfare state had the initiative in Norway as well in the other Nordic countries. It was claimed that the local governments had become reduced to servants for the state (Baldersheim, 1987). And it was the Labour party who was the champion for reforms in local and regional government, including the structural reforms in the 1950's and 60's.

From the 1980's, however, a neo-liberal strand dominated the public discourse on the development of the public sector. The new ideas became known under the heading New Public Management. NPM adherents were sceptical towards public bureaucracy and advocated smaller government and market solutions for the delivery of public services. Efficiency became the new master value in the discourse of public reforms, and the NPM gospel said that markets were more efficient than bureaucracies.

It is clear that those ideas and actors which could tie their proposals to the NPM-values would benefit from this in a political game. Even the Labour party has accepted and even introduced several NPM-inspired reforms in the government. But there are still political differences. While the agents in the conservative parties can mobilise their followers around slogans like "freedom to chose" and "cheap government", agents at the left wing have to reconcile this kind of ideas with their heritage as proponents for the welfare state and universalism in public services. Their slogan has become "change the welfare state in order to save it", what we may call "the changed welfare state narrative".

It is beyond the scope of our analysis to trace the rise of NPM-values to prominence. But the ideas and games which can be tied to New Public Management are able to mobilise the bulk of the symbolic capital in current reform policy. The right wing parties promote a two tier solution for government organisation, with bigger local governments and abolishment of regions. This solution is backed by the symbolic capital inherent in the "cheap government" narrative. A symbolic capital of this kind also works to produce internal unity among the adherents. On the other hand, the distribution of symbolic capital creates confusion and potential conflicts among the players defending the traditional welfare state values. Shall they resist or adapt? And if they are going to adapt without too much disagreement, this kind of move has to be reconciled with the protection of the welfare state. They have to serve two master ideas at the same time.

Defining the game – deploying the discursive capital

When it comes to defining what the play is all about, we can find three different positions which create the divisions between the players. The first attempt to define the play is to tie it closely to the reformed welfare state versus the freedom to choose- narrative. This definition of the issue creates a dividing line between the two right wing parties at the one hand and the leftist and centrist parties at the other. But this dividing line is a precarious one. Because of the symbolic power carried by NPM-values, many members of the welfare state parties are tempted by the freedom to choose narrative. And this narrative can be used to increase voting strength at the elections.

The second attempt to define the issue is to see it as a matter of choice between a new regionalism and a traditional one. An important trend in the regional discourse during the second half of the 1990's was the Europeanisation of the debate. Many delegations from Norway visited Brussel to learn more about the new development, and several Norwegian regions established their own offices in Brussel to promote their regions and learn from the new development in Europe. Even if Norway voted no to membership in 1994, the development within the EU has had a profound influence on the regional discourse also here.

New ideas came into circulation. Among the most important were ideas about development of regional business clusters, partnerships and regional innovation systems. It became common to argue that the regions ought to be important motors in economic development. A

competitive development policy could only be tailor-made from within the region. These ideas are reflected in most of the Norwegian policy documents about regional policy since the end of the 1990's. The county is pointed to as the most important regional development actor, with a responsibility for co-ordination, partnership building and planning.

But for many participants in the public debates, it seemed wrong to think that the small Norwegian counties could be competitive development actors at the same level as European regions, which often have as many inhabitants as Norway. They argued that Norway needed fewer and stronger regions with more tasks decentralised from the state. And they gained influence, particularly in the parties to the left and in the centre of the political spectre. At the party congress of Labour in 2000, party chair Jens Stoltenberg had to give concessions to this fraction regarding the content of the program. In the beginning of the process, he was in favour of a two tier model.

The parties to the right are also influenced by the new ideas on strong regions. But they are more inclined to point to the role of cities as development motors, and reformulate the ideas of region-building to be the building of strong city regions. In this way, it is made more consistent with the idea of a two-tier government structure in Norway.

The core of the "competitive regions" narrative is about how to foster regional development and create competitive regions. But another effect of the new ideas is to bring the discussion of democracy back to the stage of regional and local government reforms. As I have pointed to already, the "welfare state" narrative and the "cheap government" narrative, which dominated the regional discourse in Norway during the reign of NPM-ideas, focused more on equality and efficiency than on local freedom and democracy. Truly, this is also the core of the "competitive regions" narrative. But one of the arguments which support the narrative is that it is more democratic to decentralise decisions regarding regional development and other issues from the nation state to the regional level. So the competitive region narrative tries to integrate democracy as one of its inherent values, even if it may pose some problems to bridge the tension between democracy understood as decision-making in elected bodies and the idea of consensus building in regional partnerships between government and business.

But the democracy argument made the idea of strong regions more appealing to many of the proponents of a close democracy, who for many years had been on the defensive in the public debate. It is particularly the spokesmen for the centrist parties who argue from a "close democracy narrative", and use the danger for democracy as an argument against increasing the size of local and regional governments. But it is also clear that the adherents of close democracy would loose against an alliance of Labour and the Conservatives, if they joined to create bigger governments from an efficiency perspective. So many of those who had earlier defended small governments from a close democracy point of view, now embraced the new ideas of strong regions with an elected council. They argued that strong elected regions could protect against the power of state bureaucracy at all government levels. Through entering into new alliances, the centrists hoped to avoid a two-tier government system in Norway. But the alliance between "close democracy" and "competitive regions" of course is a fragile one (Bukve 2005).

So far, we have concentrated on the regional discourse within the political parties and at the political scene in the broader sense. If we look to the news media, the regional issue has not been a big issue during the last decade. The health service is a subject of interest for newspapers and TV, but they are more interested in stories with a personal touch and the state

of services than in how the health service is governed. Regarding the government structure, the most focused issue in national media has been the citizens' lack of interest in county politics. It is a fact that the participation in county elections is lower than in local and national elections. In some of the national newspapers, this is interpreted as a proof that Norway doesn't need elected bodies at the regional level. In the regional newspapers, however, we can find more nuanced discussions presenting different options for regional reform. However, most participants would agree that this is not a question which raises much attention among common people. The shaping of the regional discourse is mostly done in the political and administrative circles.

Position taking, political capital and strategies

Since Stein Rokkan first did it (Rokkan, 1966), Norwegian politics is often described as created in a tension between three political poles: the red, the blue and the green. This holds true also for our case.

At the blue pole, we find an alliance between the Conservative party and the progressive Party (right wing populists). The freedom value has traditionally dominated the discourse on government structure at the blue pole. Freedom to choose and small governments were the most important ideas to the mid 1990's. From then, the efficiency value and "small and cheap government" narrative has come to the foreground. The solution which both parties started to promote in the second half of the 1990's was a two tier government structure. Only a few county politicians in the Conservative party opposed this position taking, which benefits from the symbolic capital attached to the cheap government argument. But if we look at the political capital of the right wing parties, they have slightly more than one third of the representatives in the parliament. They have never been in a majority position alone. For winning the game, they need to form an alliance with other parties – or win a majority in the next election.

At the red pole, we find the Labour party and the Socialist Left party. These parties had a majority for a few years in the 1970's, but since then they have been dependent upon alliances. From 2005, they form a majority government with the Centre party, a green party with its stronghold in the rural regions. Even if the red pole parties have a considerable political capital with 76 of 165 parliamentary seats, they have to build alliances.

If we look at discursive position taking, the "welfare state" narrative with an emphasis on equality and strong state regulation used to dominate the red pole. Undoubtedly, the small and cheap government ideas had some influence even at this pole during the NPM-era. The strategy has changed between accepting NPM-type reforms and opposing them. And after 2000, the "competitive region" narrative has taken over as the main alternative to the welfare state narrative. This implies a change to relying on innovation policy and development from below rather than redistribution from the centre to the periphery, but at the same time reversing some of the NPM-reforms from earlier government, particularly in the welfare sectors. But the red pole parties are in lack of strategies which can maintain internal unity and increase their symbolic capital. Even if the party programmes promote new and bigger regions, we find adherents of two tier governments and status quo in both parties.

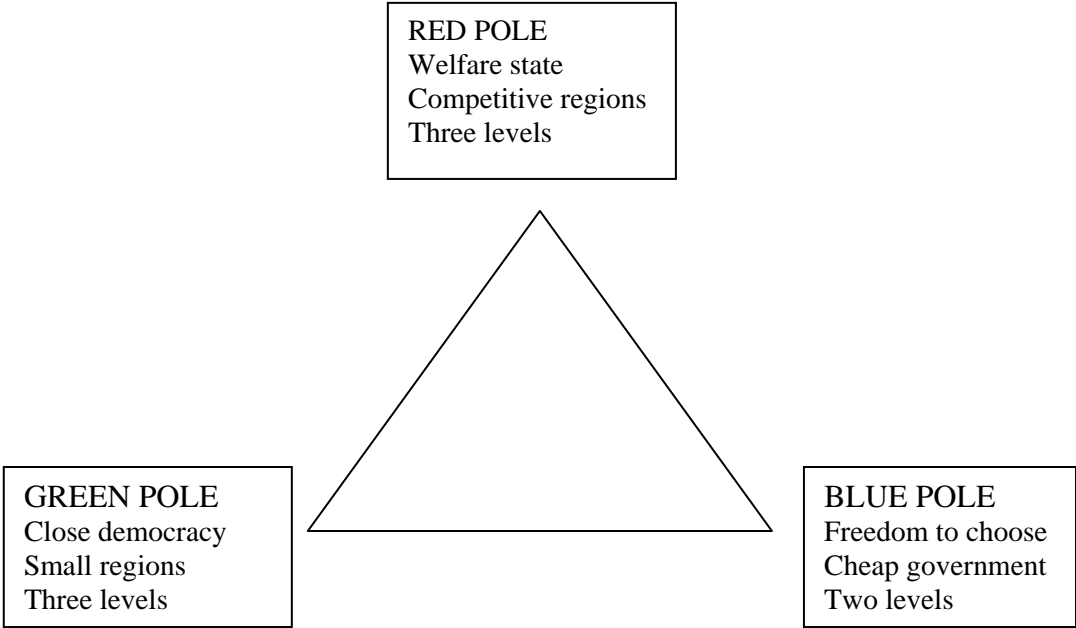
The green pole consists of three small parties, the Centre party, the Christian People party and the Liberal Party. They are far from a political majority, but are often able to build alliances in two directions. Currently they have split up in alliance strategies, after the Centre party

entered the red-green government in 2005. At the green pole, the “close democracy” narrative tended to dominate, and became an argument for small government units. As far as small units also were important at the blue pole, they could side with each other. But this alliance weathered around the millennium, even if the centrists and conservatives then formed a cabinet together. Also at the green pole, a “competitive region” narrative gained ground. But most politicians at this pole wanted to keep the regions as small as possible.

If we look at position taking of other actors, the association of Local and Regional Authorities was very active in promoting bigger regions. Researchers were hired to draw the new regional map, and many of the experts within the field promoted the competitive region narrative. In 2004, all county mayors joined a proposal for bigger regions, presupposed that the new regions could take over a broader range of tasks from the central government.

Also, two regional alliances were formed by counties, one in Western Norway and one in south-east. In 2002 they applied to the government for a trial with decentralisation of a range of tasks including regional planning, economic development measures and transport. But the then minister of regional affairs, from the conservative party, did accept only transfer of powers from the counties to the new regions, not from the state. After that, the regional alliances lost momentum.

Figure 2: The political poles and their position taking



Taken together, we can see a picture of three political poles where each of the poles is in itself a camp for the battle between different viewpoints and discourses. And in addition, the situation with three ideological and political poles in itself makes it difficult to reach majority agreements. This is a situation which creates a complicated terrain for the political game.

There are three possible solutions to this game. One is a majority for one of the poles. This is not the case today, even if it can well be the case that the blue pole will get a majority after the next election. The second is that one of the parties at the green or red pole changes

position towards a two tier solution. This is not a feasible solution with the current government coalition, but it could be a solution in a situation with a blue pole government. Then it is possible that the Labour party could change towards a two tier solutions, which was the original position taking for the party leader. Or a green pole party could buy a two tier solution if it is sold as a local government reform decentralising power from regions to local governments. This is what happened in Denmark (Bukve *et al.*, forthcoming). The third solution is an alliance between the red and green pole. This alliance could be possible if sufficiently many tasks were decentralised from the state to the regions, so the reform could be promoted as both a close democracy reform and a competitive region reform. But this did not happen, and why?

One answer is that the regions were too divided in the final phase of the game, another that the government state did not propose to decentralise sufficiently many tasks. Let us consider these answers:

During the hearing process in 2007, all the counties were asked to give their opinions about task transfer and regional division. A majority of the county councils and municipalities were in favour of structural reform. 11 of 19 counties preferred bigger regions. 8 were against, but two of them would accept bigger regions if the regions could have more tasks transferred from the state. About two-third of the municipalities were in favour of bigger regions.

Deciding the new borders, however, was a bigger problem. It seems that the struggle for power and established positions has been the decisive factor behind the decisions in the county councils. The hearings could be interpreted in different ways. The government could stress the fact that a majority of the counties wanted bigger and stronger regions, or they could stress the disagreement about the new borders.

When the government chose the last option, it must be seen in light of the resistance from the ministries and state bureaucracy, and the internal disagreement within the governing parties. State bureaucrats in the ministries and regional state administrations were mostly in opposition to regional reform. And the process was organised in a way where the bureaucrats in the sector ministries were the ones who had to propose which policy tasks that could be decentralised. Listening to the ministries, the government proposed only minor tasks to be decentralised. Also the county governors, many of them former politicians with a strong position within their parties, were against reform. Some of them organised a silent opposition which probably had effects, at least in the Centre party. And there was a lack of leadership within the cabinet. The process was not led with political determination. The prime minister was invisible. This created a situation where it was easy for the sector ministries to oppose decentralisation. The minister of regional affairs deployed what she had of political capital in order to carry through a reform. But with internal opposition in her party, and without visible support from the prime minister, that capital was not sufficient. The solution to the reform game could only be status quo, given the structural relations in the field and the distribution of capital among the players. What we also can see currently, is that the game has turned into a scapegoating game between national and regional politicians. In the wake of the reform failure, there is an ongoing struggle about who is to blame. This game is about the future distribution of symbolic capital in the field.

Concluding remarks

The conceptual discussion and case study in this article shows us a way to utilise the theory of practice in the study of public policy and governance in general and in the study of regional reform in particular. My point of departure is the general concepts in the theory of practice. But as Bourdieu advised, I have to make a demarcation of the relevant field and investigate the relevant forms of capital for that particular field.

Regarding the demarcation of the field, I suggest another demarcation than Bourdieu's concepts of a political and a bureaucratic field. As it is recognised in the contemporary literature on policy making and governance, policy making and implementation are not separate processes, but intertwined moments of the same process. The agents in the field are positioned in relation to each other across institutional borders. In order to grasp these particularities of the field, I suggest the concept governance field and use it in my analysis. The governance field also has its subfields, and in the case study I argue that it is possible to demarcate the regional governance field as a distinct sub-field within the Norwegian governance field. However, this sub-field is not totally autonomous.

Like other fields, the governance field is influenced by particular forms of capital. I take Bourdieu's discussion of symbolic power as my point of departure, and compare it to the way Scott analyse pillars of institutions. There are striking similarities, and I suggest a terminology for institutionalised capital in governance fields that mixes Bourdieu and Scott's vocabulary. I suggest the concept institutional capital as an overarching concept. The forms of the institutional capital are the regulative and the symbolic capital. This division is convenient for my purpose. Regulative capital is important in governance processes, and it has to be investigated by an analysis of the constitutional, juridical and organisational structures which position the agents in the governance games. Symbolic capital is also important because it intervenes in the political discourse, the game of ideas.

Building on Bourdieu's view of politics as a double game, I suggest to make a distinction between discursive and political capital. Information capital and expert capital are forms of the discursive capital, but the game of ideas is also heavily influenced by the symbolic form of institutional capital. The political capital, in the narrow sense I suggest to use the concept, will have a different composition according to the form of the governance game. I suggest that electoral capital, alliance capital and social capital are crucial in the voting game I use as my case study. But it is necessary to explore other forms of governance games in order to describe the forms of political capital in a better way.

One important advantage of the theory of practice is that it permits us to integrate theories which have traditionally been viewed as competing, like institutional and structural theory versus theories of strategic and rational actors. This can be done because of two important advantages of Bourdieu's perspective. His concept of habitus permits us to see that agents act strategically in relation to the particular field and conjuncture they are situated in, together with the dispositions that constitute their habitus. And his concept of capital makes it possible to see social structures not only as limits to action, but as potential resources for the agents. In my opinion, Bourdieu suggests a viable solution to handle and may be transcend the division between a structural and an action perspective in social science.

Regarding the empirical method, I suggest some moments in case studies of governance games. Firstly, it is necessary to demarcate the field and judge its relative autonomy from the wider governance and social field. Secondly, the regulative structures must be mapped, since

they are important for the positioning of the agents in relation to each other. Further, it is necessary to analyse the processes of idea formulation, how the discursive capital is deployed and how symbolic capital influences the discursive positions and distribution of capital in the idea game. Then one has to study the game around the relevant issue.

Of course, the suggested perspective should not be applied only in the study of particular issues. There ought to be done several kind of empirical studies from this perspective. Other kind of games could be studied, and a wider range of governance subfields could be compared. Generative studies of a field's genesis and dynamics are also interesting. In this way, we can hope to reach a better understanding of the governance field and the forms of capital which are working in the field.

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