Wacquant, L. (2023). *Bourdieu in the City: Challenging Urban Theory*. Polity Press, 288 pages, ISBN: 1509556443

Reviewed by Anthony Richardson*

This latest work from Loïc Wacquant has the sense of a writer taking stock of a journey so far: revisiting his body of work on urban marginality and the precariat; neoliberalism and the creation of the 'penal state'; the focus on a 'carnal' or embodied sociology; and the problem of racial domination. In *Bourdieu in the city*, he responds to criticisms of his earlier work, situates some of those earlier works into an integrative schema, and embarks on an ambitious new attempt to reinvigorate and reframe urban theory. This book is successful in all three goals. For the reader unfamiliar with either Wacquant's earlier work or Bourdieu's intellectual and practical engagement with 'the urban', this book is an excellent overview to both. It is, however, more a culmination of what has come before than an introduction, as Wacquant embeds his own work on territorial stigma and urban marginalisation within a call for cities to be understood as sites of temporally and spatially embedded sociological contestation. As such, this book makes a strong argument for the possibility of a new Bourdieusian approach to urban sociology and is a timely and valuable addition to current debates over the direction of urban theory. The chapters offer cogent outlines and summaries of various aspects of Wacquant's work and his intellectual and methodological relationship to Bourdieu, and each chapter will be addressed in turn.

The prologue operates as a critical overview of the field(s) of urban studies, categorising the various disconnected siloes of academic endeavour. In that sense, this chapter neatly defines the problem of intellectual disjunction to which Bourdieu's methodology and theory are offered as a possible remedy. This tour through the forest of theoretical and methodological assumptions and approaches is brief but bracing, and it sets the stage for Wacquant's key aim for this work, namely to both provide an overarching framework for his body of published work and demonstrate Bourdieu's integrative capacity to:

> …range along levels of abstraction and to travel smoothly across empirical scales to link large structures of power (a country, state, or metropolis) to the meso level of institutions (such as fields of cultural production, science, journalism, policy, and politics) to the minutiae of everyday interaction. (p. 19–20)

Chapter 1 provides an overview of Bourdieu's engagement with the urban, beginning with a clear exploration of the ways in which Bourdieu understood how power and capital operate and interact across and within space, both socially and physically. Through his discussion of Bourdieu's earliest work in Algeria, Wacquant identifies the development of his understanding of the city as both the generative site of capital in its numerous forms and power, and the arena for their deployment and reproduction by numerous actors across a range of scales; from individuals and families, through agricultural modes of production and urban/global markets, to military camps, informal settlements and the city itself. Wacquant pays particular attention to the generation and operation of symbolic power within the city, its connection to both social

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and physical space, and its relationship to spatially based marginalisation. For both Bourdieu and Wacquant, cities are hubs for powerful symbolic authorities like religious, political, legal, media, artistic, academic and scientific institutions, and their power to consequentially categorise people, activities and space directly impacts material urban reality.

The second chapter provides an excellent overview of Wacquant's conceptualisation of the (re)production and diffusion of territorial stigmatisation and marginalisation in the neoliberal city. For the reader unfamiliar with either of these concepts, or Bourdieu's integral part in their creation and ongoing value as explicatory tools, the value of this chapter cannot be overstated. Wacquant's presentation and discussion of the trialectic of symbolic, social and physical space through which the urban becomes both the object and site of social struggle, although conceptually dense, is concisely presented. This chapter is a valuable exploration of the concept of territorial stigma, and the example of the Red Belt of Paris successfully "highlights the structural logics of territorial stigmatization and offers a flexible framework for the comparative study of its fabrication, dissemination, and effects across social space – and not just in the neighborhoods it targets" (p. 89). Wacquant's topology of the production and impact of territorial taint (p. 82), in particular, clearly enunciates the interactions between the three components of this approach.

It is in Chapter 3, dealing with the analytic triad of class, ethnicity and penality, that Wacquant's criticism of siloed academic expertise is perhaps the most relevant. He convincingly argues for the necessary removal of the academic, theoretical and professional siloes between these three currently disconnected fields. Furthermore, as an integrative chapter, seeking to construct an overarching narrative across three of Wacquant's earlier substantial works, this is the most valuable section of the book. Wacquant manages to situate these works, and the development of his thought and practice that they represent, in a valuable "analytic cartography" (p. 115) which nonetheless deftly avoids any sense of theoretical structuralism or determinism.

To turn, at the end, to one minor criticism from the prologue: Wacquant's brief discussion of "the prophets of 'urban science' surfing the ocean of big data newly released by cities" (p. 3) dismisses Bettencourt (2021) as an exemplar of a positivist complex adaptive systems approach to cities, which uses big data to identify deterministic and decontextualised laws behind the growth and character of all cities. This rejection is no surprise, given Wacquant's argument that "Bourdieu rejects economic determinism, the search for foundations, and the neo-Hegelian notion that history is endowed with a directional logic" (p. 34). However, Wacquant's understandable rejection of this sort of epistemic certainty, or 'arrogance', does overlook a more 'humble' (Ogilvy, 2013) systems approach which, although less influential, does exist. It is part of an intellectual heritage (Morin, 2007) that understands that no predictive understanding of emergent complex systems is possible, and thus it stands in strong opposition to the positivist claims of Bettencourt and others of his ilk. It is nonetheless also distinct from Latour's (2005) actor-network theory (ANT) due to its inclusion of a metabolic aspect within the urban; a paradigm in which cities are complex socioecological (subsuming the political, cultural and economic into that 'social') and dissipative systems which are emergent through time (for a recent example, see Isendahl and Barthel, 2018). This tradition should be acknowledged as distinct, even if Wacquant then chooses to dismiss it.

This would be too minor a criticism to raise in such an ambitious and important work except that this omission becomes relevant elsewhere in the book. The first occasion is when Wacquant discusses the multiscalar aspect of Bourdieu's approach:

> Accordingly, one should grasp urban constellations, categories, and practices as the products, weapons, and stakes of struggles waged over multiple temporalities, ranging from the *longue durée* of secular macro-structures to the mid-level tempos of political cycles and institutional gyrations to the short-term phenomenological horizon of persons at ground level. (p. 34)

It is clear that a Bourdeusian sociology of the city allows for such a multiscalar view, both temporally and spatially, but is this insight unique to this approach? Likewise, Wacquant's point that "the boundaries of the urban are vaporous, like those of a cloud" (p. 161) is a commonplace understanding in the complex systems field (Giampetro, 1994; Gunderson & Holling, 2002; Haberl et al., 2019). Seeing the urban through a complex systems lens, as a non-reified, porous-bordered and ever-emergent network of social, economic and political contestation, embedded in both ecological and dissipative systems and temporal and spatial space, also allows for an understanding of urban reality as existing at different spatiotemporal scales. These are minor points to raise to be sure, but there is perhaps some ground here for these similarities to be acknowledged and explored further.

In conclusion, though, the question raised by this book is whether it does achieve its stated aim of demonstrating the "the heuristic potential of Bourdieu's sociology for invigorating and reframing urban studies" (p. 17). The answer must be in the affirmative, as this ambitious and well-reasoned book requires its readers to consider Bourdieu seriously in terms of proposing an integrative paradigm for a disparate and disjointed field of academic study. In that sense it is an important entry into this long-running debate.

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