


## ARTICLE

## Capital, Agency and Distinction in Dynamics of Conversion of Economic Functions of Cities: Lessons from Lafayette (US)

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### ABSTRACT

The transition to the digital society attracts the attention of a growing group of scholars who seek to investigate the constraints of this new stage of the productive forces on urban interventions. From this context comes the motivation for this paper, which proposes to analyze findings of an empirical survey of data conducted in the North American city of Lafayette, with the objective of investigating a process of reconversion of its economic functions in the ongoing transition to the digital economy, with significant implications on the composition of the labor market, particularly in the commercial and services sectors. As a result, Lafayette's spatial distribution reflects striking aspects associated with historical, cultural, ethical and socioeconomic configurations. According to Bourdieu's theoretical framework, it also reflects in this way the habitus of the different social groups, as well as the way in which different capitals - economic, social, cultural and symbolic - are mobilized, aiming at the domain of the field.

### KEYWORDS

Urban Interventions, Dynamics of Conversion of Economic Functions of Cities, Bourdieu's Theory of Practical Action, Agency

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Received: 08/12/2020.

Revised: 04/07/2021.

Accepted: 08/09/2021.

Published Online: 02/23/2022.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15728/bbr.2021.19.2.6>



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Like Giddens and Elias and before them, Parsons and even Weber, Bourdieu is interested in the study of the agency's theme, with his work having raised him to the level of one of the most engaged and internationally read French social scientists (Sant'Anna & Diniz, 2017; Bourdieu, 2010). His Theory of Practical Action gradually gains space also within the scope of organizational studies, particularly considering the relevance of new theoretical-conceptual and methodological approaches capable of better apprehending the complexity of the contemporary environment. Context in which disruptions and discontinuities in individual-work-organization relationships bring to light the relevance of new modes of production and regulation typical of the fourth industrial revolution. Centered on serial production and on the dependency of middle classes of consumption, the economy of the fourth industrial revolution gradually finds itself facing modes of production and regulation, based on the exponential expansion of the introduction of digital-based technologies, pointing to what is called the fourth industrial revolution (Susskind & Susskind, 2017; Schwab, 2017).


Likewise, the transition to the digital society attracts the attention of a growing group of scholars who seek to investigate the constraints of this new stage of the productive forces on urban interventions (Harvey, 1992). In this context, studies are recorded on the ways in which different social agents - entrepreneurs, representatives of civil society entities, community and government leaders, workers, and citizens - articulate themselves in dynamics of reconversion of the economic functions of cities (Nelson, Sant'Anna & Wood, 2016; Oliveira, Sant'Anna & Diniz, 2013; Sant'Anna, Oliveira & Diniz, 2012).

Empirical data shows the protagonism of enterprising agents in such processes, considering, however, that such grouping is not presented in a monolithic way. On the contrary, they present variations among themselves in terms of roles played, personal attributes, and management models, as well as living in constant interrelationships, conflicts and alliances within the processes of city transformation. These are relevant findings, since the classical literature on entrepreneurship is still not attentive to the dynamics of coexistence and tension between different types of entrepreneurs (Nelson, Sant'Anna & Wood, 2016).

The classical literature on entrepreneurship also does not seem very attentive to the coexistence and tension between different types of entrepreneurs. At the same time, it reveals not to consider the importance of community social ecology in creating contexts that contribute to define the parameters of interaction between such actors and their social role in the community (Nelson, Sant'Anna & Wood, 2016).

Different from the extremes that characterize traditional thinking about entrepreneurship, in which on the one hand we have the vision of entrepreneurs as almost mythical elements, unlike other individuals, who by their genius and unique skills would be able to identify and seize opportunities and create new riches that others would not be able to glimpse. On the other hand, the idea that the technological and economic macro forces would create opportunities for new ventures, which are idealized at random by people other than by particular virtues happen to be in the right place at the right time (Nelson, Sant'Anna & Wood, 2016).

In order to verify that different entrepreneurs are inserted in social contexts, in which their actors have different and conflicting roles seems to us not to be the only contribution of these two recent studies. It is also evident that the entrepreneur depends on his environment in a way not yet made explicit by literature. It is not without importance that, for example, the existence and availability of a historical center values and facilitates the gifts and inclinations of "types" of entrepreneurs in a more relevant way than in other contexts (Nelson, Sant'Anna & Wood, 2016).



Moreover, findings suggest that, although the types of entrepreneurs found in the international literature may be recognized in different contexts, the trajectories and social origins of people representing such types may be quite different. This indicates that even if the types of entrepreneurs end up having a typical universal profile, the path they follow to occupy a certain dominating role in their field may vary significantly, depending on the prevailing socioeconomic dynamic. Moreover, diversity among the types of entrepreneurs, by preventing them from pursuing common objectives, tends to preserve the power of the traditional political oligarchy (Nelson, Sant'Anna & Wood, 2016).

Finally, the protagonism played by entrepreneurs is often accompanied by a weakening of the power of local public agents (Harvey, 2018). Convergent with assumptions defended by Maricato (1997) - and, contrary to what was advocated by Borja and Castells (1996) - it points to the loss of influence of traditional political groups and or the recrudescence of old tactics such as populism, welfarism, clientelism, and the exchange of favors. There is also a panorama of low cooperation culture and weak articulation between the political, business, and community fields, which, according to Ferreira (2007), has serious consequences for the sustainability of the concept of an "entrepreneurial city". This, to the extent that partnerships between private initiatives and the public sector, i.e., a "shared leadership", is fundamental in the implementation of projects of public interest (Borja & Castells, 1996).

Ferreira (2007) also adds that the development of "business cities" requires "consensus" among social actors, with a view to legitimizing the local "vocation", as well as the public investments needed to make the city attractive. From this perspective, in order to achieve an effectively sustainable development it seems relevant to foster mechanisms that broaden the integration between the different social fields - political, business and community - so that the actions undertaken reach breadth and representativeness.

Nevertheless, it is relevant that the main contribution of the study is the "finding" of Bourdieu's theoretical framework as a device of analysis of the investigated dynamics, in particular, of the mobilized capital and the main relations (re-)established by the social agents involved in it. Besides allowing a theoretical framework to deepen issues such as agency, domination, distinction, among others inherent to Bourdieu's sociology (Bourdieu, 2010, 2009).

Even in the field of entrepreneurship, as most of these studies are of North American and, occasionally, European origin, little is known about distinctions between Brazilian entrepreneurs and those from other countries, if not those of Nordic origin. Exceptions are the studies conducted by Mallmann, Borba and Ruppenthal (2005) on psychological types found in business incubators in Santa Maria (Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil) and, more recently, studies conducted by Sant'Anna and collaborators, in the Brazilian states of Minas Gerais, and Rio de Janeiro, which bring contributions about the performance of entrepreneurs *in loco*, in the country, where very little is known about their performance *vis-à-vis* the community in which they settle (Nelson et al., 2016; Sant'Anna et al., 2012).

From this context comes the motivation for this article, which proposes to present findings of an empirical survey of data conducted in the North American city of Lafayette, in the southern state of Louisiana, with the objective of investigating a process of reconversion of its economic functions in the ongoing transition to the digital economy, with significant implications on the composition of the social forces.

More specifically, in addition to comparative analyzes with research on the topic conducted in Brazil (Sant'Anna et al., 2016, 2012, 2011; Oliveira, Sant'Anna & Diniz, 2011), it points to problems and issues that are significant to our analyzes, notably by anticipating movements and

trends, conflicts and coalitions experienced in Lafayette, including the relevance of the mobilization of former capital and new capital required to dominate the entrepreneurial fields in view of societal relations arising from the ongoing fourth industrial revolution. Added to this, the presence in Lafayette of historical (Latin colonization), cultural (ethnic diversity), religious (Catholicism), and urban (layout of historic centers) characteristics that both distinguish it from other North American cities, as it makes it significant to comparative analysis with similar dynamics studied in Brazil (Sant'Anna et al., 2016, 2012, 2011; Oliveira, Sant'Anna & Diniz, 2011).

In this transition it is relevant to highlight Lafayette's historical, demographic, cultural, spatial and socioeconomic configurations. In spatial terms, as well as a large number of North American cities, Lafayette deserves to be pointed out as spatially spread and dependent on road transport. These factors, as recommended by Jacobs (2011), are potential offenders of integration and mobilization of human skills for the production of "new work", central elements to social and spatial vitality.

The spatial distribution of Lafayette also reflects striking aspects associated with ethnic segregation. Years of slavery have left, especially in cities of southern states, deep scars in the relations and articulations between whites and *creoles* - including blacks, Latinos, Asians - constituting a relevant element to the understanding of their local dynamics, their *habitus* and mechanisms of (re-)production of different capitals, mobilized in the search for dominance of the countryside. This, as one seeks to investigate, through repetitions, of different forms, of the same assumptions, in the dynamics of reconversion to the digital economy. From these articulations and their analysis, the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's Theory of Practical Action is significant.

## 2. THE SOCIOLOGY OF BOURDIEU

One of the main contributions of Bourdieu's sociology is the understanding that social actors, endowed with similar or distinct *habitus* and unequally distributed capital, interrelate within a social space, in which conflicts and alliances take place, in the search for the maintenance or transformation of the current state of power. Such consideration highlights, therefore, concepts proposed by the author: *Habitus*, *Field*, and *Capital* (Bourdieu, 2010, 2009).

Bourdieu (1998) defines *habitus* as a system of durable arrangements and principles that can function as structuring structures, that is, as schemes that generate and organize collective and individual actions. *Habitus* therefore presupposes a set of principles of vision and tastes that guide the choice of individuals and direct them to act in certain ways. Social actors endowed with distinct *habitus* tend, as a result, to behave differently and, therefore, constitute a differentiating principle.

The *habitus* is acquired by the actors through the interiorization of social structures, structures that bear individual and collective stories that are incorporated by the agents. When socializing, the agents are likely to dominate, even without full consciousness, the laws of functioning of their group and behave according to these provisions. Therefore, people from the same class tend to have quite harmonized practices, more than they know or even want, because by being guided by the laws, each one adjusts to the other.

The field, in turn, comprises a dynamic space, composed of distinct positions determined by the volume of capital held by each of its agents. It also defines the environment in which fights and alliances take place between such agents in search of the maintenance or transformation of the current state of forces.

As the ownership of capital, in each field, tends to be unequal, groups and subgroups characterized by different lifestyles are observed. Thus, one camp tends to live in permanent conflict, where the dominant groups seek to maintain their privileges and the others try to alter the current distribution of capital. It is also possible to observe the formation of alliances between distinct groups of actors (Bourdieu, 2010, 2009).

Each field, therefore, has its own history, its own object (artistic, educational, political) and specific mechanisms. As a result, it has a certain autonomy in relation to other social spaces. Nevertheless, the fields interrelate and suffer influences from each other, external pressures that are interpreted and translated based on the internal logic of the field.

Although each field presents peculiar attributes, it is possible to highlight some universal characteristics, which are: 1. the insertion in a field requires the internalization of its operating laws; 2. the structure of the field reflects the different positions occupied by agents and the volume of capital held by them and, finally, 3. its dynamic nature (Bourdieu, 2010, 2009).

Finally, capital is conceptualized by Bourdieu as the main form of power within a field being, simultaneously, an instrument and object of dispute. Bourdieu assumes the existence of three types of capital overcoming previous approaches that reduce the social world to the economic perspective. Moreover, the author proposes that the forms of capital can be convertible into one another as, for example, cultural capital can be socially recognized in a given field and thus be transformed into symbolic capital and *vice-versa* (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Capitals from the Bourdieusian perspective*

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Economic Capital | Resources associated with production factors (land) and economic assets, such as material goods   |
| Social Capital   | Develops the maintenance of social relations, based on the obtaining of benefits obtained by a certain subject or group when establishing such relations  |
| Cultural Capital | Set of knowledge and intellectual qualifications transmitted by the Family and school institutions throughout the subject's life. This capital can acquire three forms: the incorporated state, as a durable characteristic of the body (the way of speaking, Family habitus); the objective state, as the possessions of cultural goods (works of art) the institutionalized state, as academic titles |
| Symbolic Capital | Related to the accumulation of prestige and social recognition by an individual who preserves under this control the resources considered essential in a given field.   |

*Source:* Adapted from Bourdieu (1998).

The concept of economic capital in Bourdieu is similar to Marx's definition: Resources associated with production factors (land) and economic assets, such as material goods. Cultural capital, in turn, corresponds to the set of knowledge and intellectual qualifications transmitted by the family and school institutions throughout the subject's life. This capital can take three forms: 1. the incorporated state, as a durable characteristic of the body (the way of speaking, family habits); 2. the objective state, as the possession of cultural goods (works of art); 3. the institutionalized state, as academic titles (Bourdieu, 2010, 2009).

Finally, symbolic capital is related to the accumulation of prestige and social recognition by an individual who preserves under his control the resources considered essential in a given field. Thus, it can be considered a synthesis of economic and cultural capital that has been recognized as legitimate in a social space.

The differences within a field, especially in terms of capital, generate the division of space into social classes, or rather class positions, which are associated with a specific culture or *habitus*. By opting for a lifestyle, individuals end up classifying themselves as members of a given social class or class position.

### 3. METHOD

Based on the objectives and the theoretical framework outlined, through the empirical research conducted, it is sought to reconstruct the dynamics of reconversion of economic functions experienced by Lafayette towards its insertion in the upper circuit of the economy of the fourth industrial revolution (Susskind & Susskind, 2017; Schwab, 2017; Santos, 1979). Following the post-industrial discourses disseminated along with others North American cities - and also Brazilian ones - one pursued to verify how characteristics such as virtualization, digitalization, horizontalization, and decentralization of the relations of production and regulation are present in the dynamics of capitals - economic, social, cultural, symbolic - mobilized by the different agents that make up the city's entrepreneurial ecosystem, as well as the disputes and coalitions they develop with a view to maintaining the status quo or articulating transformations (Bourdieu, 2010, 2009).

In Lafayette, the abandonment of the historic center as a space for socializing, commercial exchanges, and the exercise of power (Lefebvre, 1991); the continuous department stores and shopping malls closings; the proliferation of internet shopping; the growing of automation; the proliferation of virtual and home-office jobs; the expansion of large national companies with business models based on platforms and networks; the segregation of the population in condominiums and neighborhoods with low real estate values, are some of the symptoms easily observed *in loco* as well as in the documents, photographs, and interviews quotes registered.

Setting the scene, as a starting point of the study, an extensive analysis of the history of the state of Louisiana and, more specifically, of the city of Lafayette and its surroundings was carried out (Martinez, 2017; Allured & Martin, 2013; Reed, 2009; Gauthreaux, 2007; Hyde Jr, 2007; Bernard, 2003), accompanied by semi-structured and in-depth interviews with respondents dedicated to the history of the city and/or directly involved in the current process of reconversion experienced in Lafayette.

As a result, in addition to direct observation - of the non-participating type - 20 interviews were conducted, resulting in more than 30 hours of reports. The interviews varied in duration and structure, becoming more selective as the study progressed. Typically, they included the personal history and relationships of the interviewee with the community; descriptions of the main changes experienced by the community over time; history and structure of its most significant developments.

As for the treatment and analysis of the data obtained, first of all, data from all sources are used to develop a detailed history of the city and its economic and social trajectory. To this end, we sought to identify and characterize the main phases or cycles of community evolution, the main social, economic, and political agents and forces at play during each phase. We also sought to identify with each of our sources their role in the community and personal exposure to the remarkable societal events in relation to the current process of reconversion of the economic functions of the city.

Then, from Bourdieu's theoretical framework, it was sought to identify the main cognitive categories, both in relation to the socio-institutional dynamics and individual variations, emerging from the interviews. As a result, it was possible to identify themes and categories used by community members to describe the community and its members, as well as, later, to compose "typology" of its entrepreneurs, from the economic, social and symbolic capitals mobilized by them (Bourdieu, 1998).

From opposing pairs of themes associated with the community dynamics of the city, repeatedly present in the reports obtained in the interviews and the analysis of its historical trajectory, it was possible to identify different groups of entrepreneurs. Although Lafayette's current economic position is favorable and the small size of the community, our interviews indicated that the city still experiences an intense process of economic and social transformation, as well as, that this process is marked by strong antithesis and contradictions that, among other things, restrict a common coordination and collective actions of entrepreneurs as a "class" or homogeneous group. The main antithetical pairs that forge and express the tensions, distinctions and contradictions experienced in the current dynamics of reconversion of their economic functions have been identified: *White Americans* and *Indians*, *White Americans* and *Cajuns*, *White Americans* and *Blackcreoles*.

## 4. THE LAFAYETTE CASE

### 4.1. LAFAYETTE AND SURROUNDINGS

The city and parish of Lafayette comprise a mixture of cultures, in particular indigenous, African, English, French and Spanish. With a current population of about 126,000 and situated in the southwest of the southern state of Louisiana, Lafayette, until 1765, was a region mostly occupied by the Atakapa Indians, with the presence of few Europeans, mostly hunters and smugglers. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, French settlers founded a first European settlement in the region (Petit Manchac), a trading post along the Vermilion River. It was, however, in the middle of that same century that the region received a significant influx of Catholic, French-speaking immigrants (*Cajuns*), expelled from Canadá (Acadie) after Britain's victory over France in the Seven Years War.

In 1824, the region was designated as the seat of Lafayette Parish. During this period, its lands were converted by European settlers - French and British - into large sugar cane plantations, using African and indigenous slave labour. According to data from the American census, in 1830, the slave population was 41% of the population, comprising. In 1860, almost half of the population (49.6%) was made up of slaves. The population of *Free People of Color* represented 3.0% and 2.4% of the population, respectively in 1830 and 1860. The economy of the parish and the city will remain based on agriculture until the 20th century.

In the 1930s, however, the mechanization of agriculture reduced the need for agricultural workers and in the 1940s, the discovery of oil and gas in the parish significantly changed the economic profile of the region, initiating a new economic cycle based on the oil and gas extraction industry. At the same time, the two major world wars will bring significant changes in the socio-economic dynamics of the region, including systematic "Americanization" movement of the *Cajun* people and segregation of the black population, limiting the few remaining agricultural jobs or low-skilled urban work.

After its near extinction in the 1990s, favored by fluctuations in oil prices and the *Yuppie* movement, *Cajun* and *Creole* cultures are experiencing a renaissance and Lafayette is consolidating as the headquarters of the “*Cajun Country*” and an important center of *Creole* culture, a mixture that attracts entrepreneurs and businessmen, opening space for the diversification of its economy.

Following the footprints left by previous studies on the theme (Sant’Anna et al., 2016, 2012, 2011; Oliveira, Sant’Anna & Diniz, 2011), and the crossing of theoretical and empirical data obtained in Lafayette, it is possible to delineate the dynamics of the networks of competition and collaboration throughout their main economic cycles, as well as the different capitals backed and/or legitimized by hegemonic *habitus*, mobilized with a view to dominating the field of social relations and local power (Bourdieu, 1998). As in all the previous cases, in Lafayette, historically, entrepreneurs - local and external - occupy a prominent position in the processes and dynamics of reconversion of their economic functions. In Lafayette’s case, such protagonism is even evident, particularly in view of the wide spread, especially since the Second World War, of the strengthening of *habitus* based on values associated with white settlers.

From all the data collected we can see the possibility of portraying Lafayette’s history as an arena of forces - like a “game” (Bourdieu, 1998) - in which different *habitus* and capitals are mobilized by the different actors on stage, with a view to achieving distinguishing factors that allow them hegemony in the control of the local power field. In general, the main local economic cycles can easily be associated with complex disputes and coalitions carried out by the different “types” of local entrepreneurs of today and the past.

In Lafayette’s case, such disputes and coalitions are associated with strong ethnic and identity components involving, throughout his history, alliances and intestinal struggles, resulting in victorious and losing “groups”: *White Americans* (descendants of British and French settlers), *Cajuns* (descendants of Acadians), *Creoles* (descendants of Hispanic, Italian and German settlers, born on North American soil), *Backcreoles* (Afro-descendants), *Free Persons of Color* (descendants of freed slaves and half-breeds), and *American Indians* (Atakapa Indians), whose *habitus* and identified capitals are summarized in Table 2.

It is worth reiterating that the data presented in Table 2 result from analysis of documents regarding the history of Lafayette - including its economic cycles; social dynamics; entrepreneurs, heroes and leaders - consulted in the library of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette as well as reports from the set of interviews conducted. To treatment of the data obtained the content analysis method was used according to procedures defined by Bardin (2011).

#### 4.2. THE DYNAMICS OF THE AKKADIAN COMMUNITY ECOSYSTEM

Cotecking the notions proposed around Bourdieu’s sociology with empirical data and bibliographic production involving the history, economy, society and culture of Lafayette and the region (Martinez, 2017; Allured & Martin, 2013; Reed, 2009; Gauthreaux, 2007; Hyde Jr, 2007; Bernard, 2003), it was possible to reconstitute the games and tensions underlying the socio-spatial dynamics throughout its main development cycles: the cycle marked by agriculture, which extends from the 18th century to the middle of the 20th century; and the subsequent development cycle based on the oil and gas extraction industry, from the 1940s on. The instability of international commodity prices and the search for clean sources of energy have, however, accentuated the concern for greater diversification of the academic economy and, in this way, the development of strategies and skills necessary for insertion in the industries of the fourth industrial revolution, such as research, science, technology and innovation (RD&I), tourism and creative.



**Table 2**  
*Habitus and main capitals by groups of social agents*

| Groups                | Habitus/Distinctive Capitals  |
|-----------------------|---|
| White Americans       | Aggressiveness, american dream, americanization, business, coldness, colonizer, competition, consumption, consumerism, conqueror, control, customary way of life, growth, dominance, money, elitism, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial spirit, expansionism, fast food, good american, big capital, grandeur, hierarchy, high tech, empire, impetuosity, individualism, intelligence, interventionism, innovation, leader, leadership, machismo, mathematics, materialism, mainstream, management, modernization, neckties, norm, order, pattern, boss, patriotism, privilege, progress, power, rationality, rock 'n' roll, superficiality, superiority, supremacy, technoscience, technology, urban, plantation, winner, yankee  |
| Cajuns                | Joy, friendliness, art, aristocracy, cultural activism, self-isolation, autonomy, beauty, bom-vivant, hunting, countryside, chivalry, collectivism, community, counterculture, cool, coonass, courtesy cooperation, creation, creativity, culture, cultural baggage, cultural heritage, development, diplomacy, ecology, elegance, inbreeding, endogeny, scholarship, style, ethic pride, exile, exoticism, party, festivals, folk rituals, forgotten people, gas way of life, gastronomy, kindness, grassroots, honor, hospitality, hot, idealism, identity, interior, interiority, introversion, laissez-faire, leisure, loyalty, french language, literature, environment, music, neighborhood, nobility, perseverance, fishing, poetry, pleasure, preservation, primitivism, provincialism, quality, redneck, refinement, cultural resistance, silent generation, simplicity, slow-living, solidarity, South Louisiana way of life, sprit de corps, symbolic ethnicity, tradition, trendy |
| Creoles               | Commerce, diversity, family, grocery, improvisation, langniappe friendship, latin, local, mixing, multitalented, pedders, relationship, survival, subsistence, work, improvisation  |
| Free Persons of Color | Abnormal, atopy, bastard, conformity, cross-fertilization, invisibility, non-conformity, marginalization, miscegenation, mixing, mulatto, plaçade, pllassablanc, racial prejudice, subsistence, quiet person  |
| Blackcreoles          | Racial activism, blues, conformism, criminality, cooking, culture, ancestral culture, body, disorganization, degradation, unemployment, professional disqualification, drugs, slavery, exclusion, faith, ugliness, hip-hop culture, nonconformity, incorrigibility, indolence, financial instability, jazz, waist game, lifting for a living, loitering, magic, trickery, mysticism, music, nigger, oppression, danger, poverty, precariat, prison, prostitution, protest, rebellion, race, rejection, religiosity, racial resistance, rhythm, segregation, survival, submission, swing, manual labor, vagrancy, addiction, violence, Woddu   |
| American Indians      | Cultural erasure, carnival, collectivity, community, racial confinement, belief, ecology, slavery, oblivion, stereotyping, warrior spirit, exclusion, genocide, history, indifference, non-conformity, isolation, legends, struggle, Mardi Gras Indian, environment, nature, past, people, primitivism, resistance, ritual, sacred, wisdom, superstition, tradition, land, tribe, values  |

*Source:* Research data.

As a result, it is possible to see economic capital as the pivot of the articulation and mobilization of other capital. This, either through its holders or those excluded from it. It is not by coincidence that the main plays are triggered by entrepreneurs.

Similarly, one can again identify groups of entrepreneurs observed in an analysis conducted by Sant'Anna and colleagues in studies of economic function reconversion dynamics in Brazilian cities (Sant'Anna et al., 2016, 2012, 2011; Oliveira, Sant'Anna & Diniz, 2011).

More complex, however, was to learn that in the case of Lafayette, the concept of entrepreneurship has particular nuances. While in the Brazilian cities investigated, the notion of entrepreneurship is practically superimposed on entrepreneurship; in the case of Lafayette, it acquires a more personal role, more centered on the way of being, on the *habitus*, which forges its way of being and acting. This is reflected in the very characterization attributed by those researched in relation to the most protagonist social agents.

If in Brazil one tends to define the “types” of entrepreneurs from the enterprise; in Lafayette, such construction tends from characteristics of the ethnic and social groups to which the individuals are linked: Europeans, Afro-descendants, Latinos, *Cajuns*, *Creolos*, *Backcreolos* and so on. It is likely, given the proximity between notions of *habitus* and culture, that while in the United States, entrepreneurship is something intrinsic to *habitus* that forges its culture - as well as individualism and patriotism -; in the Brazilian case, entrepreneurship, to the extent that it is associated with risk and the possibility of failure, is less associated with a valuable individual attribute than with survival and die (Stinchfield, Nelson & Wood, 2010; Stinchfield, 2009, Levi-Strauss, 1962). Not at all rare, when in the Brazilian cities researched, the association between unsuccessful enterprise and the person of the entrepreneur, who is not infrequently discouraged to new attempts and marked by the stigmas of “broken”, “bankrupt” (Nelson et al., 2016).

Finally, rather than grouping the capitals of the ecosystem investigated into categories, as recommended by Bourdieu, or even identifying their main agents - in the case of local entrepreneurs - in typologies of entrepreneurs, the most relevant seems to understand the ways in which the different *habitus* that constitute them - and their translation into capitals - are mobilized over time; as well as, how agencies and institutionalities are articulated, with a view to dominating the field, producing alliances and disputes, which forge and characterize the Lafayette ecosystem, with emphasis on relations between *White Americans* and *Indians*, *White Americans* and *Cajuns*, *White Americans* and *Blackcreoles*, *White Americans vs Indians*.

Using data from the revised historiography, as well as interview reports, the first major dispute in the field of economic relations in the context of Lafayette and the region will be fought between the first settlers and native Indians (Atakapa). Resorting to practices such as bartering, through the trade of hides and natural products, the formation of coercion for the expulsion of “foreigners”, until the dispute for land and control of the territory in order to enable the dissemination of large sugar cane *plantations*. Therefore, narratives, resources, legislation, institutional and military apparatuses are decisive for the outcomes portrayed in the current compendiums and articles by historians.

In this context, economic capital (currency, arms, fortifications), associated with social capital (church, colonial system), cultural capital (military training, agricultural training) and symbolic capital (“*making America*”, “*spreading the Christian faith*”, “*civilizing the new world*”) will be relentlessly applied, resulting practically in the elimination of the indigenous element from the arena of dispute, with implications for these peoples, still present today.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the surviving indigenous population of the United States will find themselves isolated and confined to reservations. In addition to the deaths of thousands of their ancestors in wars or as victims of diseases transmitted by foreigners, there are deliberate processes aimed at isolating and erasing their culture. In the case of Louisiana, although the presence of sixty-one indigenous tribes, the interaction with white settlers, if daily, is under the mark of “invisibility”, as non-US citizens. An exception is made to periods of carnival or *Mardi Gras* Indigenous, where stereotypes and (re-)meanings of fragments of their culture are appropriated by the mass consumption market.

The result of all this is that the *habitus* of the Anglo-Saxon colonizer will impose itself. Strengthened by the “victories” in the battles against the indigenous people and equally demarcating a position of supremacy - economic, military, cultural, social and symbolic - before the other ethnic groups present in the region - including newcomers, among them Germans and Italians, the latter being, by allegedly Latin traits, including darker *skin-colors*. To these are added the enslaved Indians, the *Creolos* (descendants of Spaniards and children of migrants born in Louisiana), the growing contingent of blacks subjected to the slavery system, the master molasses of the landowner system, and the *Free People of Color* (including the mulattos, freed slaves, mostly the result of legally prohibited relations between blacks or colored and white people). To this complexity of ethnic “types” and “estancias” will be added a group of French-speaking Catholic exiles: the *Cajuns*.

#### 4.2.1. *White Americans vs Cajuns*

The history of the Cajuns in Lafayette goes back to the Acadia region in Canada, colonized in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by French Catholics. Despised by the French metropolis and having its territory incorporated to the British empire, the Akkadians - French speaking Catholics, farmers, fishermen, hunters, essentially a peasant people whose ancestors had come to the province to colonize the “Acadie”, now Nova Scotia (Canada), already in 1604. Independent and self-sufficient people, the Akkadians sought their self-subsistence by developing particular standards of living without hindrance by French colonial officials.

In 1713, however, with their incorporation into the British empire, the Akkadians refused the unconditional oath of allegiance to the new king, emphasizing the position of remaining citizens of a neutral territory. The position adopted eventually contributed, in 1755, to their expulsion, in the event called *Grand Dérangement*.

Dictatorially, the vast majority of the French Akkadian population, about ten thousand people, are taken to ships awaiting them for deportation, with little or no notice. Embarked and dispersed throughout the American colonies of New England, France and the Caribbean between that year and 1763, Akkadians are separated from their families and subjected to inhumane conditions both on deportation ships and in their lands of exile. They usually encounter hostility and contempt, feeling the fear and hatred of Anglo-Americans for French-speaking Catholics. It should be noted that the *Grand Dérangement* will coincide with the early stages of bloody warfare between England and France, fought in part of the desert of British colonial America. As a result, Akkadian exiles are commonly subjected to discrimination and poverty, if not misery.

The experience of banishment, however, had a powerful effect on the Akkadian exiles: it served to unite them wherever they were. After all, even geographically dispersed exiles often shared a common past and a collective historical ordeal. They also shared kinship ties, a language, religion, customs and a popular heritage. In short, a particularly consolidated *habitus*.

Around 1765, a group of these Akkadians, hearing about a land where French was spoken, travelled to Louisiana, passing through Saint Domingue, now Haiti, to build a new Acadia. Establishing themselves in the region, little by little, other Akkadians join the group. Mixing with other neighboring ethnic groups - French crioulos, Spaniards, Americans of Anglo-Saxon origin, Africans and Caribbean, Germans and Italians - the group gradually incorporates influences from other cultural traditions, constituting, at the end of the nineteenth century, an ethnic group of hybrid character, however, marked by the *habitus* of the first Akkadians, of French origin and Catholics, who landed in Louisiana.

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At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an intense movement promoted by *American Whites* of “Americanization” will significantly affect *Cajun* culture (Bernard, 2003). In 1921, the teaching of French is prohibited in the state’s public schools. The two world wars, accompanied by the discovery of oil in the region, intensify the campaign to Americanize the Cajun descendants. Unable to resist the offensive of the Anglo-Saxon American *mainstream*, they gradually lost the language and cultural heritage of French origin.

At the end of the 1960s, however, with the spread of ethical and civil rights movements, there was a local revival of interest in *Cajun* culture, with growing awareness among the descendants of Akkadians of the real threats to their cultural origins.

The interest in the French language, the rescue of music and cuisine are accompanied by growing academic interest in *Cajun* history and culture, as well as cultural preservation efforts. Thanks to efforts promoted by professors and researchers at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette, the mobilization of community groups, artists, poets, musicians, as well as insertion in institutions such as the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana - CODIFF, attention is now being paid to the singularities of culture and especially to the myths and events surrounding the expulsion of their academic ancestors.

By appropriating *Cajun* narratives, Akkadians manage to have their culture not fully absorbed by the Anglo-Saxon American *mainstream*. Instead, they strengthen their ties with Francophone Canada through academic exchanges and the establishment of the World Acadian Congress, held for the first time in 1994. At the same time, a *boom* of poets, writers, musicians, scholars and Cajun storytellers witnessed the vitality of their culture (Köstler, 2014).

This movement will also prove salutary in the face of overcoming the prejudices associated with the *Cajun* population, explained more broadly in historical periods such as the War of Secession and the two major world wars, particularly the second. The difficulties with the English language.

In the contemporary context, the renaissance of *Cajun* culture tends to be a fundamental capital in facing the transformations that characterize the global economy and its impacts on Lafayette. The transition to the digital economy already leaves effects, including the exclusion of a strong contingent of professionals from the formal labor market through automation, as well as the introduction of new consumer behavior, including online shopping, which has repercussions on the closure of shopping malls, large retail chains and department stores. In addition, the impact of their high dependence on the oil and gas industry, which is highly subject to international price fluctuations. The effects of financial crises, such as that of 2008, are still visible in the number of jobs eliminated, in student evasion - particularly with the *Blackcreoles*.

As a result, the social and symbolic capital associated with the *habitus Cajun* seems to constitute a significant bargaining chip in the face of the challenges of the transition to a new pattern of production associated with the “fourth industrial revolution”. The communitarian sense, the capacity of constitution and insertion in networks of relationships, the cultural heritage, linked to music, gastronomy and the “Akkadian lifestyle”, gives the group potential for differentiation in important sectors of the new economy, such as tourism, design, arts, graphic creation and other branches of creative industry. The sectors of innovation, information technology and entertainment are added to these, including the segments of events, game programming and content production.

Based on the content analysis executed, Table 3 summarizes the main signifiers associated with *White American* and *Cajuns Lafayette* entrepreneurs' allowing to differentiate them in the dispute for dominance of the city's entrepreneurial field (Bourdieu, 2010, 2009).

**Table 3**  
*White Americans vs. Cajuns: Content Analysis Results*

| White Americans  | Cajuns  |
|--|---|
| Aggressiveness, American dream, Americanization, business, coldness, colonizer, competition, consumption, consumerism, conqueror, control, customary way of life, growth, dominion, money, entrepreneurship, expansionism, good American, grandiosity, hierarchy, empire, impetuosity, individualism, interventionism, machismo rationality, materialism, mainstream, management | Joy, friendship, art, aristocracy, cultural activism, self- isolation, autonomy, beauty, good living, hunting, country, chivalry, collectivism, community, counterculture, cool, coonass, courtesy cooperation, creation, creativity, culture, cultural heritage, development, diplomacy, ecology |

*Source:* Research data.

The challenge, however, as pointed out by authors such as Bernard (2003), will be not to allow the commoditization of their symbolic capital. In other terms, the massification and cheapening of its heritage: the “McDonaldization” (as can be seen in the expansion of large *fast-food* chains, such as Popeye) and diffusion of its ethnic cuisine in sessions of frozen food from virtual mega supermarkets; massification of the *Cajun* brand; imitations and decharacterizations of products, including music production. The nature of these threats is also evident in Lafayette’s cultural, academic and intellectual scenes at the time of the *Cajun boom* in the 1980-1990s, with repercussions, for example, in campaigns to valorize the *Cajun* brand, as well as in the creation of institutionalities, such as the “*Cajun* Product Certification” label.

#### 4.2.2. *White Americans vs Blackcreoles*

Another arena in which *habitus* and capital mobilization gain importance along the societal dynamics in which Lafayette is inserted concerns policies and initiatives of segregation of the black population. The marks of a past of slavery, exclusion, family dereferencing and humiliations seem continuously (re)meant, but still far from being overcome. The signifiers commonly presented to characterize them on their own denote, notwithstanding advances and achievements, the mobilization, on one side and on the other, of the devices that historically maintain the asymmetry of forces and the “white privilege” (Rankine, 2019).

Corroborating this perspective, results from the analysis of the content of documents and reports of interviews conducted bring up the reference to terms and expressions that even today, explicitly or surreptitiously, point to prejudices that transverse *dispositifs* and strategies of exclusion of certain agents of the dispute for the domain of the entrepreneurial field, favoring the maintenance of the *status quo*, through the disqualification and/or stereotyping of real or potential rivals as well as unveil possibilities for transformations, through actions of resistance and/or confrontation. In the case of the relations between White Americans vs. Blackcreoles, consciously or unconsciously, marks of the conflict emerge from the content analysis carried out (Table 4).

**Table 4**  
*White Americans vs. Blackcreoles: Content Analysis Results*

| White Americans  | Blackcreoles  |
|--|---|
| Aggressiveness, American dream, Americanization, business, coldness, colonizer, competition, consumption, consumerism, conqueror, control, customary way of life, growth, dominion, money, entrepreneurship, expansionism, good American, grandiosity, hierarchy, empire, impetuosity, individualism, interventionism, machismo rationality, materialism, mainstream, management | Racial activism, blues, conformism, criminality, culinary, culture, ancestral culture, body, disorganization, degradation, unemployment, professional disqualification, drugs, slavery, exclusion, faith, ugliness, hip-hop culture, non-conformism |

*Source:* Research data.

The revised literature is prodigal in pointing out mechanisms historically created in the macro context in which Lafayette is located, with critical implications for the black population, practically excluding it from the game board: Code Noir (1724); Acts of Apprenticeship (1770); state law requires free blacks to show deference in their treatment of white people (1806); prohibition of interracial unions (1825); prohibition of free blacks from holding public office or meeting in assembly under any pretext (1834); Amendment to the Louisiana constitution states that “[...] the legislature must never pass any act authorizing free Negroes to vote or immigrate to the state under any pretext” (1864); creation of the system of racial segregation in public schools (1864); withdrawal of federal troops from the state, putting an end to the post-civil war period known as the “Black Renaissance” and the rise of hate groups: KKK, Knights of the White Camellia, Innocents (1877); deprivation of the right to vote for people of color (1906).

No doubt, measures such as these are not received passively. On the contrary, they imply reactions, fights, defeats and conquests. In this struggle, social and symbolic capital is built up by the black population in order to confront the processes of domination. However, the asymmetry of forces present in this historical “theatre of operations”, in which economic and cultural capital (*e.g.* quality educational and academic training) is practically non-existent, cannot be disregarded. Nevertheless, as a result of the mobilizations, whether led by black groups, religious and political leaders, associations, social activists or representatives of counter-culture, such laws are, one by one, suppressed and the 20th century will see, particularly from the 1960s onwards, a strong movement of struggles for greater equality of rights and opportunities.

The end of segregation in schools, the insertion of young black people in top universities, the greater insertion in the political scenario - having, in 2009, the election of the first black president of the country -, the expansion of agendas around diversity, are remarkable achievements. However, they do not represent the overcoming of the issue. Centuries of domination, segregation, limitation to possibilities and resources of social and economic mobility leave deep wounds, of slow healing.

Moreover, in an increasingly interconnected world, phenomena such as the current outbreak of waves of conservatism, the escalation of hate speech, the strengthening of parties and ultra-right groups, the deconstruction of democratic institutions, the concentration of wealth and the expansion of economic inequalities, the unsustainability of economic models focused on consumption, the exhaustion of neoliberal experiences, demographic and geopolitical changes, such as the upsurge in trade disputes between the USA and China, configure a scenario of uncertainties, in which old and new capitals begin to mobilize for new games.

To the legacy, built on devices and institutionalities that limited blacks and other minorities, access to quality education and, therefore, to opportunities for more qualified and well-paid jobs; the building of visible and invisible barriers to retraining and professional advancement;

the alienation of decision and power circles; the erosion of self-esteem; they can, in the face of the ongoing changes in the environment, acquire new and even more perverse clothes.

The pace of technological advances, the mastery of techno-science, emerging business models and organizational architectures, changes in notions of work, career and skills required for insertion in the reconfigured trays of interests, create renewed barriers to entry, benefiting already known players, rather than others. Lafayette's findings probably signal devices already in operation, which through digital exclusion strategies, "Uberization" of work, access barriers to "innovation centers", intersectionality of capital unfavorable to competitiveness, for example, being simultaneously black, women, homosexual and poorly qualified.

Another finding is that the competition in the context of Lafayette, compared to the Brazilian cities previously studied, is detached from the *Capital-Labour* dyad, in its sense conferred throughout the previous industrial revolutions. Thus, to the extent that all are converted into *Capital* or better into *Entrepreneurs*, including from their own careers - the competition can liquefy itself, configuring itself into competition of all against all, thus seeming to weaken intrinsically more communitarian and altruistic values. Alliances and coalitions between groups thus seem to tend to be weaker, more fluid and focused on individual and short-term gains. At the same time, contracts can signal more cooperative options, centered on collective and community *causes*, with less focus on consumerism and more attention to social and interpersonal relations. The challenge, in any case, will be on how to make the transition, considering, for example, the construction of new and or resignification of old capital. In cities like Lafayette, the spatial configuration itself, based on geographical sprawl, may constitute an additional challenge to, as Jacobs (2011) suggests, impose restrictions on its vitality. In any case, the dice are launched.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Although the growing interest of researchers in the contributions of Bourdieu's Theory of Practical Action in relation to studies around the notion of agency, one of the main gaps left by this author, as explained by Alain Touraine, was his focus on the study of dynamics inherent to industrial society, ignoring the processes of transition and coexistence of a post-industrial society, with peculiar characteristics, both in addressing conflicts and agents.

In this direction, findings obtained in Lafayette contribute important elements to overcome such gap, indicating potentialities of Bourdieu's sociology in the study not only in reconversion processes promoted by the tourism and creative industries (Sant'Anna et al., 2011; Oliveira, Sant'Anna & Diniz, 2011) or by late industrialization processes (Sant'Anna et al., 2012) but also in transitions to digital tech-based industries, as in Lafayette.

The findings obtained in Lafayette also corroborate the relevance of applying Bourdieu's Theory of Practical Action as a device for apprehending dynamics of requalification of economic functions involving different spatialities, socioeconomic, political and cultural realities. Likewise, it points to its robustness and applicability in analyzes, construction of scenarios, interventions, and development of public policies aimed at fostering entrepreneurship in contexts of macroeconomic changes and or technological disruptions, allowing to model how different capitals - social, economic, cultural, symbolic - can be mobilized by different entrepreneurial groups allowing innovative forms of synergy and cooperation, mitigating conflicts and anticipating crises.

In this direction, findings obtained in Lafayette call attention for the way in which the relationship between *habitus* and capital enables, in specific contexts (field and historical moment), strategies and devices that are applied, resulting in practices of obtaining distinction between the main agents historically involved (*White Americans, American Indians, Blackcreoles, Cajuns*).

In other terms, the ways in which *habitus* can forge capital, which when transacted, are able to (re-)produce practices that ensure the mastery of a given field. This is consistent with Bourdieu's (1998) formulation:  $[(\textit{Habitus}) (\textit{Capital})] + \textit{Field} = \textit{Practice}$ .

Changing the positions of the terms of the equation, one has to:  $[(\textit{Habitus})(\textit{Capital})] = [\textit{Practice} - \textit{Field}]$ , or that:  $\textit{Habitus} = [(\textit{Practice} - \textit{Field})]/\textit{Capital}$ . In this configuration, *Capital* is inversely proportional to *Habitus*. That is, the greater the volume of *Capital*, the smaller the role of the *Habitus* and *vice versa*. As a result, a given agent aiming at the conquest/maintenance of the domain of a given field, at a given historical moment, may glimpse in the manipulation of *Capital* an important strategic component, particularly considering the difficulty in modifying the structure of the *Habitus*:

$$\begin{aligned} &[(\textit{Habitus}) (\textit{Capital})] + \textit{Field} = \textit{Practice} \\ &(\textit{Habitus}) (\textit{Capital}) = \textit{Practice} - \textit{Field} \\ &\textit{Habitus} = [\textit{Practice} - \textit{Field}] \\ &\textit{Capital} \end{aligned}$$

Still based on the formulation proposed by Bourdieu (1998), assuming  $[(\textit{Habitus})(\textit{Capital})] = \textit{Agency}$ , one has  $\textit{Agency} = [\textit{Practice} - \textit{Field}]$ . This put and considering *Field* as a constant (to the extent that it is shared by all agents in the same context), one can suggest a direct relationship between *Practice* and *Agency*:

Considering:

$$\begin{aligned} \textit{Agency} &= [(\textit{Habitus}) (\textit{Capital})] \\ \textit{Field} &= \textit{Context} \\ \textit{Practice} &= \textit{Game} \end{aligned}$$

We have:

$$\begin{aligned} &[(\textit{Habitus}) (\textit{Capital})] + \textit{Field} = \textit{Practice} \\ &\textit{Agency} + \textit{Field} = \textit{Practice} \\ &\textit{Agency} = \textit{Practice} - \textit{Field} \end{aligned}$$

As result,

$$\begin{aligned} \textit{Agency} &= \textit{Practice} - \textit{Field} \\ \textit{Agency} &= \textit{Game} - \textit{Context} \\ \textit{Game} &= \textit{Agency} + \textit{Context} \end{aligned}$$

In the case of Lafayette, relations between *White Americans* and *Blackcreoles* or *White Americans and Cajuns*, in the aftermath of the great war, are illustrations of how transactions between capital (*Agency*) relate to the construction of political, institutional, legal devices (*Practice, Game*) that favor the dominance of the *Field (Context)*.

Relations between *White Americans* and *Blackcreoles*, equally, evidence, throughout history, ways in which the management of political-institutional devices (*e.g.* exclusion of the right to vote, at the end of the period that became known as *Black Renaissance*) and institutional (control of the budget for the educational system), implied in the exclusion of the *Blackcreoles* to present and future employment opportunities and, consequently, social ascension, keeping them limited



to the universe of agricultural and low-qualification jobs. As a result, practically excluding them from the game under the dynamics of the oil and gas extraction industry.

Applying the formula to the contemporary process of reconfiguration of Lafayette's economic functions, in the direction of the digital economy, it is possible to raise the *habitus* of the Cajun group, competitive advantages that can be gained, through the transaction of social and symbolic capitals, of obtaining competitive differentials, through networks of personal relationships and business integration. Or yet, its potential to mobilize this same capital in the institutionalization of partnerships and alliances capable of mobilizing key elements of its *habitus*, such as the cultural, creative, entertainment and tourism industry, as well as *design* and content for the digital age.

In any case, the findings contribute to overcome the criticism that Bourdieu's sociology is too statistical, ahistorical and does not explain how the *habitus* grants freedom to agents, pointing to it as determinist, for disregarding the autonomy of social agents. Criticisms, which do not seem to be sustained, at least in the cases studied.

Finally, we must highlight contributions from our incursion in Lafayette to the readings of Levi-Strauss (1962) led by Stinchfield et al. (2010), suggesting another type of entrepreneurial performance to be added to the Artist, Engineer, and Craftsman types: the *Bricoleur*. The previous findings of Sant'Anna and collaborators in Brazil already corroborate *bricoleur* as an active type in its respective dynamics of reconversion of economic functions towards tourism and the creative industry (Nelson et al., 2016). On the other hand, in Lafayette, a city with a strong industrial tradition, this profile is not very pronounced. Thus, if the core of the theses defended by authors such as Stinchfield et al. (2010) and Stinchfield (2009) are correct, the strengthening of the bricoleur side of the Cajuns may constitute a singular competitive differentiation factor in the transition of economic functions underway in Lafayette, (re)defining, who knows, the "new" winners and losers.

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#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

There is no conflict of interest

#### **AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION**

##### **Author 1**

Contribution: theoretical review and problematization; data collection and analysis

##### **Author 2**

Contribution: research proposal; data collection.

##### **Author 3**

Contribution: preparation and writing of the text; elaboration of tables; selection of references.

