

A SOUTHERN PERSPECTIVE ON *ACTES*

For Afrânio Garcia, in memoriam

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Every time I write an academic paper, I try to do it in the style of *Actes*. It's a form of writing that involves intellectual decisions – how to construct knowledge problems and offer explanations. This style has a material imprint. It's visually recognizable in its intensive use of images, interview excerpts, tables, graphs, spatial diagrams, and so on. Most frequently, it employs framing devices (*encadrés*) that can take the form of sub- or hypertexts or links, and comments that allow for the integration of specific themes or interpretive connections. *Actes* reveals what dominant academic rules conceal: the obstacles to constructing knowledge problems, the value placed on empirical operations, and above all, the transcendence of textual constraint as the sole support for ideas. All of this foregrounds practices prior to writing, the conditions of possibility for research in the social sciences, and writing itself as a craft.

There's no doubt that *Actes* was a great laboratory for Bourdieu and his closest collaborators to develop a truly reflexive sociology. This statement invites us to question a paradox: in the social sciences of the current century, the demand for an authorial voice is commonplace, reflexivity seems to be a fad, and digital technology encourages breaking with the monotony of printed text and employing multiple communicative strategies. Nevertheless, currently, it is increasingly common to read narcissistic essays written with impulses contrary to those proposed by *Actes*. Both the review of *Actes'* history and the challenge of writing in accordance with its tradition are acts of rebellion against the dominant intellectual and academic order: that is what this great journal conveys.

We could say that the imprint of this journal is recognizable in its style of thought, writing, and textual and editorial organization, elements whose combination resulted from at least three factors. The first is a historical factor, marked by the time in which it was implemented and during which it had that generative effect. The second is an intellectual factor, which prioritized the selection or invitation of authors and editors for thematic issues. Finally, there is a social factor: the formation of a “society of thought,” a network of people from multiple disciplinary and national origins who gained recognition through the journal, and for whom *Actes* was and

is the material emblem par excellence of the collective work fostered by Pierre Bourdieu. The dynamics of this collaborative work are then essential to fully understand the evolution of the intellectual projects of the journal's founder. If, until 2002, Bourdieu's community materialized in *Actes*, there is much to ponder regarding the place of other authors of the journal in the transnational academic space and their effects on the ways in which Bourdieu's *œuvre* is transmitted. I would like to address these dimensions through a personal experience that, in some ways, illustrates the channels opened by *Actes* and by Bourdieu's work in the Southern Cone of Latin America.

At the genesis of my relationship with this journal was an institution, the social anthropology graduate programme of the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro (PPGAS), and a person, Afrânio Garcia (1948–2024), who supervised my doctoral (1998) and master's (1994) theses. An economist, anthropologist, and a keen, rigorous, and committed intellectual, Afrânio was an extraordinary person. His long history of scientific training and activity in Paris, and since the mid-1980s as a member of the *Centre de sociologie de l'éducation et de la culture* (CSEC), was shared with me — to the point of introducing me to his international scientific network — with a keen awareness of our peripheral position (Gheorghiu, 2018).

In all the courses at the Museum, more than half of the reading lists were in English and French. French was the predominant language in the bibliography of professors like Afrânio, Moacir Palmeira or José Sergio Leite Lopes and the articles in *Actes* were the most frequently referenced. The entire collection of *Actes* was available at the library, with a valuable tool: a folder containing photocopied indexes of all the issues. When one went to print an *Actes* article for a class, one could freely select others, not necessarily complementary to the required reading. When one was choosing an area of specialization, entire issues could be photocopied.

In the late 1980s, almost every Argentinian student in the social and human sciences was reading Bourdieu. It was the result of a relatively early reception of an author then mostly perceived as a social theorist (the main reference was *El oficio de sociólogo*) sometimes with ideological accents, as “Gramsci con Bourdieu,” the title of a 1984 article by Néstor García Canclini, can suggest (Baranger, 2008; Sorá, 2023). In contrast, in the 1990s those Brazilian professors taught us early on that Bourdieu's work was, above all, empirically rooted, collective and transnational. From primary sources, we learned about the ins and outs of each *Centre de sociologie européenne* (CSE) production, the backstage aspects, and the ramifications of the research radiating from the Parisian

center. These productions were tools for empirical research.

From the early 1990s, my knowledge of the journal was mediated by personal acquaintance with many of its authors, almost all of them researchers from the CSE/CSEC. Brazil was the only country in Latin America where this was possible (Mota Rocha 2022). The PPGAS was an international academic center where we could meet great foreign authors in person. From the Bourdieusian circle, I remember Abdelmalek Sayad, Jean-Pierre Faguer, Jean-Claude Combessie, Monique de Saint Martin, Roger Chartier, Christian Baudelot, Loïc Wacquant, Benoît de l'Estoile, Anne-Marie Thiesse, Gisèle Sapiro, Franck Poupeau, and others. They are evidence of the scientific policy constructed by my reference professors and the type of interlocutors they favoured. Those of us who were really interested in that way of doing social science were then appropriating the rudiments of a scientific habitus.

After completing my master's thesis – an ethnography of the international book fairs in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo – Afrânio suggested that I send a copy to Roger Chartier. In 1996, two years later, he instructed me to send Bourdieu my second article, an analysis of the publishing and reception of the work of Gilberto Freyre, a central figure in the canon of Brazilian social thought (Garcia, Sorá and Rivron, 2026). Bourdieu's reply was generous regarding my work, which

he read in Portuguese through his Spanish-language lens. Through Afrânio, Bourdieu learned of my work on fairs. I then wrote an article (“La maison et l'entreprise. José Olympio et l'évolution de l'édition brésilienne”) in the issue 126–127 of *Actes (Édition, éditeurs I* – March 1999). It represented a pinnacle of my scientific career. Shortly before Bourdieu's death, I was invited to contribute to one of the two 2002 issues edited by Johan Heilbron and Gisèle Sapiro. My second article in *Actes*, “Un échange dénié. La traduction d'auteurs brésiliens en Argentine,” appeared in issue 145, dedicated to *La circulation internationale des idées*.

I had recently returned to my country. In a very difficult time, I was able to join *Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas* (CONICET) as a researcher and the National University of Córdoba as a teacher. In Brazil, an article in *Actes* was as valuable as an entire book in a foreign language (Mota Rocha, 2022). This wasn't the case in Argentina. In my first *échec* for promotion at CONICET, my second article in *Actes* was graded like any other article in a local journal. However, at my new university, Alicia Gutiérrez was doing sustained work interpreting, translating, and teaching Bourdieu. We couldn't mobilize the reading of French texts as we did in Brazil. Spanish, as a powerful but peripheral language, entails the task of constant translation, and the university social

sciences and humanities environment tends to reject the reading of bibliographies in other languages. If this hadn't been the case, there wouldn't have been any *Actes* issues available, except for the few in the possession of isolated subscribers – such as Denis Baranger, a central mediator – and a couple of copies in Buenos Aires research centers.

I then decided to start a publishing strategy. I translated some articles from *Actes* and edited them in the *Revista del Museo de Antropología*. I remember two in particular: “La disparition de la ‘joie du peuple’” by José Sergio Leite Lopes and Sylvain Maresca, and “Les paysans à la plage” by Patrick Champagne. We wanted to use these kinds of texts in class and introduce these authors in Spanish. In the Entreculturas series at the Eduvim university press, we published books by Joseph Jurt, Yves Dezalay, Gisèle Sapiro, Anne-Catherine Wagner, and Sophie Noël, along with innovative Latin American authors. Alejandrina Falcón, a specialist in translation studies, also told us about her plan to publish the pioneering issue of *Actes* on *Translation: International Literary Exchanges* (see Falcón, 2025). In 2026, this entire issue of *Actes* will be published as a book, in Spanish, by the *Tren en Movimiento* publishing house in Buenos Aires.

My relationship with *Actes* and the CSE network has slowly gained ground among a constellation of colleagues who

promoted the reception of Bourdieu's work in Argentina: Carlos Altamirano, Beatriz Sarlo, Alicia Gutiérrez, Ana Teresa Martínez, Denis Baranger, Federico Neiburg, Lucas Rubinich, Javier Auyero, and others. The emergence of *Practical Sense* and its organizers' invitation to Fernanda Beigel to participate in the scientific committee propelled the formation of Espacio Bourdieu Argentina, a network of researchers who make empirical and original use of Bourdieu's legacy (Beigel et al., 2025). These appropriations are diverse, as are the experiences of approaching Bourdieu's work. The tenuous presence of *Actes* in this country is a valuable indicator of the different ways in which these ideas are incorporated in the Southern Cone and of the principles guiding this international scientific enterprise.

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