

9

QUALIFICATION

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Introduction: what is a good something?

Every day, we find ourselves confronted with many things: people, objects, ideas, plans, places, experiences, situations.¹ Regardless of whether these things or situations are new to us, or variations on something that we already know, we have to make up our minds about them: What is this? Is it any good? Should we engage with it, and if so, how? For instance, on meeting a new person at work, we quickly assess that this is a person, and a specific sort of person: woman or man; young or old; student, secretary, cleaner, visitor, boss, tourist? We also pass judgment: nice, powerful, powerful, dangerous, boring, smart, fun, like me, not like me, etc. In making these judgments, we are trying to assess quality: Is this any good? It is a good or bad person, an interesting or boring woman, a dangerous or harmless boss? Something similar happens with anything we encounter, from consumer goods and academic papers to buildings, media content, foodstuff or weather. It may happen with lightning speed, or it may take time, deliberation or investigation. The process may be individual or done in consultation with others. But in all cases, we ask what something is – and, simultaneously, if it has quality, that is: if it is a good instance of this something.

This chapter analyzes this process of assessing whether something is “a good something.” When people encounter something – whether it is new, or a version of something already known – it has to be *qualified*: people assess simultaneously what something is, and whether this something has quality. In other words: people are simultaneously *classifying*: assessing the wider class or category of things and persons it belongs to. And they are *evaluating*: considering whether something is a good or bad specimen of this class of things. We refer to this dual process of classification and evaluation as *qualification*. In doing so, we adopt and expand this rich concept, that emerged in French scholarship but has not gained much traction in Anglophone

social science yet (cf. Eymand-Duvernay 1986; Dodier 1993; Heinich 2017, 2020; see also Dodier and Barbot this volume). It has enjoyed modest success at the intersection of actor-network theory, valuation studies, and consumer research to refer to a combination of quality assessment (more commonly called valuation) and sense-making, particularly in market contexts (Callon and Muniesa 2005; Musselin and Paradeise 2005; Ariztia 2015; Fuentes and Fuentes 2017; Cochoy and Mallard 2018). We broaden this term to refer to a general process of simultaneous classifying and evaluating. This is a deeply social process: even when it happens individually and quickly, it is shaped by previous interactions and culturally specific repertoires. Moreover, this process occurs across social contexts, and certainly not exclusively in economic settings.

Our adoption of the term qualification allows us to do three things at once. First, it allows us to draw attention to a process that is omnipresent in social life, and to conceptualize and analyze this process in productive new ways. As we hope to show here, many social and cultural practices can be studied and explained in productive ways through understanding them as *processes of qualification*. To study these processes, all we need is a simple question that directs our attention to this process of qualification: “what is a good something?”

Second, adopting the term qualification allows us to draw together insights from fields of enquiry that have pursued divergent paths in understanding this process. Though less simply put, the question “What is a good something?” is at the heart of two scholarly fields: (post-)Bourdieuian cultural sociology and science and technology studies, in particular actor-network theory.² This question is also central in the emerging interdisciplinary field of valuation studies (Helgesson and Muniesa 2013; Cochoy, Deville, and McFall 2017) that draws on actor-network theory, economic sociology, and to a lesser extent cultural sociology. We use the conceptual lens of qualification to bring together cultural sociology, in particular (post)Bourdieuian cultural sociology, and actor-network theory perspectives on quality, classification, (e)valuation, and qualification. As we will discuss later in this chapter, these fields have common origins. However, these shared roots have been largely forgotten. In a sense, these field are like two persons standing back-to-back: looking the world from a similar vantage point, unable to see each other.

Third, our notion of qualification highlights the deeply relational aspects of processes of assessment and judgment (cf. Heinich 2020). Classifying and evaluating are often experienced as individual and personal; and as such are easily relegated to the domain of psychology and cognitive science. Although (post-)actor-network theory and (post-)Bourdieuian cultural sociology have followed different trajectories, they share strong assumptions about social construction and relationality. Both approaches see classifications as an important constitutive element of social order and social life. Classification is not individual information-processing – rather, it is the enactment of sociocultural logics. Moreover, both approaches are committed to the insight that “quality” is a social construct (Dahler-Larsen 2019). While social construction makes quality “real in its consequences,” as the Thomas theorem (Merton 1995) famously has it, both cultural sociologists and actor-network

scholars stress that this reality is local, limited, and learned. That something is considered “good” – or “bad,” or any other evaluative assessment – is specific to a time, place, institution, situation, and person (Mol, Moser, and Pols 2015). Finally, both approaches see qualifications as embedded in social or socio-material relations. This includes, first, face-to-face relations as they play out in actual interactions and material settings. For instance, qualifications often include conversations with other people, quests for more information, and retrospective comparisons with other evaluations and conversations. But qualifications also rely on a social, material, institutional, and technical (infra)structure of fields (Bourdieu 1977, 1984; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Bartley this volume), cultural repertoires (Lamont 1992; Lamont and Thévenot 2000), markets (Callon, Mollo, and Muniesa 2007), classification systems (DiMaggio 1987; Bowker and Star 2000), and judgment devices (Karpik 2010; Velthuis this volume).

We start by looking at cultural sociology, the sociological subfield dedicated to studying the role of cultural logics and institutions in shaping social life. Cultural sociologists typically see classification as preceding evaluation, and both classification and evaluation as enactments of durable structures or institutions (e.g., Bourdieu 1984; Vaisey and Lizardo 2016; Heinich 2020). Because of their focus on social divisions, they are especially interested in qualifications of typically “cultural” dimensions such as aesthetics and morality (Heinich 1993). However, because of its rather imperialist understanding of culture, cultural sociology has gradually extended its approach to science, economics, politics, and therefore monetary (Mears 2011; Velthuis 2007) epistemological and political qualifications (e.g., Lamont 2009, 2019). Subsequently we take focus on science and technology studies in which actor-network theory (ANT) – also known by the related term of material semiotics (Law 2008) – emerged. This approach sees qualifications as (resulting from) interactions in networks (Heuts and Mol 2013). This perspective focused initially on a limited set of empirical domains, primarily in science, technology, and innovation, fanning out in the 1990s (Farias, Blok, and Roberts 2020, xxii). This seemingly more modest agenda has had radical implications, including a forceful critique of widely accepted sociological binaries like structure-agency, micro-macro, nature-culture and concepts such as, action, taste, or, indeed, an anthropocentric focus on humans as central to qualifications. Both approaches – along with American pragmatism (e.g. Dewey 1939) – have had a decisive influence on the new pragmatic approaches showcased in this book.

Both cultural sociologists and actor-network theory scholars have asked, and answered, many versions of the question “what is a good something?” But these similar questions were asked in such different scholarly networks and jargons that the fields have been either unaware of this similarity, or very critical of the others’ strategies. We believe there are good reasons to (re)unite these fields under the heading of qualification, or its pragmatic translation “what is a good something.” There is a theoretical reason: despite methodological, epistemological, and even ontological differences, these approaches share common concerns and methods. The concept of qualification brings out these commonalities and allows us to ask

new questions and see new things. There is a practical reason: the notion of qualification highlights interesting points of divergence between these field – different ways of asking and answering “what is a good something.” For us, such points of divergence are productive. They generate new questions, allows to see the same thing simultaneously in different ways. Divergences points to frictions that exist not only in theoretical approaches but also in social life – and that therefore are worthy of further investigation and theoretization. Finally, there is a personal reason. We ourselves have followed the path from (post-)Bourdieuian cultural sociology to actor-network theory, although one of us has ventured much farther along this path. In our experience, this is not a one-way street, but a useful thoroughfare – particularly for the development of pragmatic inquiry.

Cultural sociology: arts, manners, morals, jokes, and the re/production of social life

The study of quality as a social construct with real consequences received an important impetus from the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1993; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Bourdieu argued that seemingly disinterested taste-based evaluations, for instance in music and arts, are shaped by power struggles. These struggles take place within social fields, such as the arts and educational field, and between fields in society as a whole. What is considered a good something ultimately is the result of who has gained the upper hand in “classification struggles.” These struggles result in classification systems that simultaneously classify things (“good taste” versus “bad taste,” “innovative paintings” versus “conservative paintings”) and people (“good students” versus “bad students,” “our sort of people” versus “the other sort of people”). As the famous quote in *Distinction* goes: “Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier” (Bourdieu 1984, 6). People’s “judgments of taste” follow directly from these classification systems. Thus, the actions and interactions of individuals reproduce the social order. This is done through the habitus: internalized, embodied dispositions learned in socialization, leading people to behave, think, and feel according to their social stature.

Bourdieu’s concept of quality is rooted in the Durkheim-inspired notion of culture as classification system, as it was developed in twentieth century French anthropology and linguistics. Bourdieu’s central innovation was to combine this with a Marxist understanding of social life as driven by struggle. Classifications are then reenactments of a dynamic social order defined by power differences. In *The Rules of Art* (1996) for instance, Bourdieu showed how a generational struggle in the mid-nineteenth century Parisian artworld produced a classification system that influences qualifications of art to the present day. When we ask “what is a good (or bad) artwork,” we are relying on a nineteenth-century distinction between art and non-art. To assess its worth, we have to classify – is this art? – before we are able to appreciate – is it any good? Obviously: if it is non-art, it cannot be any good.

Bourdieu’s set of innovations has kept social scientists busy for half a century, and it produced the blueprint for cultural sociology, a field that has blossomed since the

1980s. Even today, cultural sociologists typically adhere to important Bourdieusian assumptions. First: classifications produce evaluations (“judgments of taste” as the subtitle of *Distinction* has it); these in turn reproduce the sociocultural order. In other words: classification comes before evaluation. Second, actions and interactions are, in the end, the result of structural dynamics. In other words: society comes before interaction and agency. On both sides of the Atlantic, cultural sociologists have distanced themselves from sociological micro-approaches. Third, the most sociologically relevant qualifications are the ones associated with sociocultural distinctions, and therefore the ones that people inherently disagree about: aesthetics, morality, politics (cf. Heinich 1993; Kuipers, Franssen, and Holla 2019; Schwarz 2019). Cultural sociologists are less interested in qualifications in professionalized domains that draw on claims of expertise, such as scientific or religious qualifications. When they do so, they are still most interested in fields with relatively little agreement, such as philosophy or the social sciences (e.g., Bourdieu 2004), or in questions of power and domination. This focus on power and domination became especially evident in a special issue of *Minerva*, the main journal in science studies, dedicated to Bourdieusian perspectives on science (Albert and Kleinman 2011).

As has often been noted, Bourdieu’s contributions have been wide-ranging, but not entirely consistent (Lamont and Lareau 1988). Thus, while *Distinction* is theoretically about classification, empirically it is mostly about evaluation. The book is full of people judging things and people: Which piece of music do they like better? How do they rate this photograph? How do they decorate their homes? Why do they dislike this politician? This “glissando” (Lamont and Lareau 1988) has produced a bifurcation in cultural sociology: some have studied classification, others evaluation. Like the classical Gestalt image of the rabbit/duck, the Bourdieusian “glasses” seem to allow people to see one or the other, never both at the same time.

Classification

Classification was taken up mainly by institutional and cognitive sociologists. Institutionalists study how classification systems are produced and embedded in social institutions and fields. Cognitivists study how classifications inform processes of meaning-making, so in fact: how social classifications are embedded in people’s minds (and possibly bodies). These processes can be seen as complementary (McDonnell 2014; Lizardo 2017): institutional dynamics shape classification systems, which are reproduced through individual acts of classification (Vaisey 2009; Vaisey and Lizardo 2016). Institutional sociologists analyzed how such classification systems, for instance in art, are shaped, how they change over time, or how they vary cross-nationally (DiMaggio 1987; van Rees 1989; Peterson 1997; Janssen, Verboord, and Kuipers 2011; Lena and Peterson 2008; Lena 2012, 2019).

Such classification systems produce *legitimacy*: by “consecrating” “good some-things” they allow people to classify some things as better or more worthy of attention than others (Johnson, Dowd, and Ridgeway 2006; Schmutz 2005). Interestingly, this work resonates strongly with work in science and technology studies,

for instance the work by Bowker and Star' (2000) who study actual, rather than theoretical, classification systems, such as the International Classification of Diseases, and their (political) consequences. However, despite obvious similarities these approaches have led largely separate lives.

Cultural sociologists typically stress that what a field accepts as legitimate "quality" may be quite random. For instance, Mears (2011) shows convincingly, though rather anticlimactically, that the success of a fashion model cannot be linked to any tangible "quality." Some models make it, others don't. The point of artistic fields is not what they classify, but *that* they classify: this drives home the point that many are called but few are chosen.

The randomness of classification systems is most pronounced in taste-based fields, such as arts or fashion, with their inbuilt uncertainty and lack of unanimity about quality (Bielby and Bielby 1994; Franssen and Kuipers 2013). However, field theorists in organizational studies have argued that all forms of organization, from big business to social movements, are based on classification systems that produce and enable legitimacy (Fligstein and McAdam 2012). This has been shown most convincingly in "reverse" cases, where a lack of fit with classification systems hampers legitimacy (van Venrooij and Schmutz 2018). For instance, Zuckerman (1999) has shown that stocks that span various fields typically do worse in stock markets than those that neatly fit categories. Similarly, Hsu (2006) showed that movies spanning various genres perform less well than movies that neatly fit genre categories. Thus, something that is easily classified is more legitimate, and more easily seen as "a good something," while unclassifiable things are less legitimate, and therefore a "bad something."

This approach allows researchers to analyze variations and shifts in classification systems, and to explain how both individual behavior and societal patterns are shaped by these systems. However, the focus on legitimacy narrows down our understanding of evaluation: "a good something" is redefined as "a legitimate something." This sidesteps central aspects of "quality," and thus of qualification, including an affective component that makes people "feel" quality, and that makes them care about "good somethings," and that drives their actions. Because of its focus on classification as information processing, cognitive sociologists have little to say about the emotional "charge" of classification or evaluation (cf. Vaisey 2009). Thus, it is unclear how and to what extent classification of something as "legitimate" means that people experience something as aesthetically pleasing, morally just, or the reverse: ugly, bad, evil. As many critics have noted, in (post-)Bourdieuian analysis, it is difficult to distinguish people experiencing moral or aesthetic quality from people adopting a certain taste, fashion, or viewpoint because it is legitimate or a sign of high status. While strict Bourdieusians would argue that this difference is irrelevant, or a gradual distinction at best, in everyday experience there is a large gap between accepting something as legitimate and experiencing something as "of quality."

Evaluation

The issue of the affective-experiential side of judgment has been addressed by those who have followed the other Bourdieusian path, of evaluation. This

classification/evaluation gap marks a central dividing line in social theory: micro versus macro, inside versus outside, individual versus society (Elias 1978; Collins 1987; Heinich 2020). Classification is usually linked to production of culture, whereas evaluation is linked with consumption. Moreover, analyses of classification highlight macro-processes and cognitive and institutional factors, whereas studies of evaluation usually start from micro-level, experiential factors, working “upwards” to meso- and macro-levels.

The study of evaluation was developed most extensively by sociologists of taste and consumption, who have produced literally thousands of articles showing how people evaluate anything from music to food, tourist attractions to dress. These studies have addressed for instance, the aesthetic or moral criteria people employ when evaluating cultural products, consumption goods, political views, or other people. In doing this, they focus on judgments of taste but also on people’s experiences when evaluating. Generally, these tastes and experiences are investigated in relation to social background, in particular class and cultural capital but also age, gender, ethnicity, and nation (e.g., Peterson and Kern 1996; Van Eijck 2001; Katz-Gerro 2002; Johnston and Baumann 2007; Warde 2008; Jarness 2015). These studies usually take for granted the classifications underlying taste judgments. For instance, studies of musical taste often rely on existing genre distinctions, such as jazz, classical, pop, and folk music. While they may formally acknowledge that these classifications are socially constructed, in practice they tend to assume that these categories are self-evident, and that their respondents’ images of these classifications are by and large the same for researchers and their research “subjects,” even when these subjects are from different places and stations in life.

Michèle Lamont (1992, 2000, 2009) offers a productive further theorization of evaluation. A former student of Bourdieu, she shifts the theoretical focus from classification systems to “repertoires of evaluation.” These are more loosely organized cultural schemas or “toolkits” (Swidler 1986) that people draw on to evaluate the worth of people and of things, and to mark “symbolic boundaries.” In *Money, Morals and Manners* (1992) and *The Dignity of Working Men* (2000), Lamont used interviews to analyze how upper-middle class and working-class French and Americans evaluate the worth – or lack of it – of others. She shows that people use several repertoires, often not entirely consistent with each other, to produce evaluations in many flavors: moral worth, cultural sophistication, economic success, political views. In these studies, she asks people “what is a good person” – and the answers she received allow her to unpack both the notion of person and the manifold meanings of “good” in relation to persons. In her later work, she explored an ever-wider range of repertoires: academic quality (2009), civil worth (2019), and also processes of evaluations leading to stigma and exclusion (Lamont, Beljean, and Clair 2014).

Lamont’s work was developed in conversation with the rise of “pragmatist” sociology in French sociology, which also represents a critique of, and eventual radical rupture with, field theory (cf. Heinich 2017; Cefaï, this volume and the introduction to this volume). An important landmark in this pragmatist sociology is the “sociology of conventions,” developed by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006),

which moved away from questions of classification and evaluation entirely, focusing instead on justification. Starting from a historical review of public debate and contention, Boltanski and Thévenot distinguish six “orders of worth”: comprehensive cultural logics or “conventions” for claiming and understanding worth (in the context of late twentieth-century France, although it seems generalizable to most of contemporary Europe). Importantly, they focus on justification: worth is what is claimed and established as people try to find common ground with others. Thus, the question is not “what is a good something,” but instead something like “how can we make others agree with us that this is a good something?” Thus, in a move typical of pragmatic analysis, as described also by Bowen (this volume) both evaluation and classification are moved from societal structures and internalized repertoires to a situated, practical handling of justifications and conventions.

Boundaries, processes, and interactions: a post-Bourdieuian turn toward “good somethings”

The post-Bourdieuian sociology of evaluation, and its French “cousin” the sociology of conventions, marks a departure from the Bourdieuian paradigm in several ways (Beljean, Chong, and Lamont 2015). First, it offers a more processual approach that encompasses evaluation and classification (cf. Acord and DeNora 2008; Rubio and Silva 2013; Schwarz 2013; 2019). Evaluations are prioritized only insofar as they are the better starting point for research. In contrast with classifying, evaluating is “close to the surface” of everyday experience. However, evaluations both rely on, and reproduce, classifications. This is the central tenet of the “symbolic boundary” approach (Lamont and Molnar 2002; Lamont, Beljean, and Clair 2014). When people evaluate others, they refer to categories delineated by symbolic boundaries, for instance based on race, gender, class, or education. Thus, classification is embedded in evaluation. Classification, however, is usually more difficult to access, theoretically and empirically, and cannot always be easily deduced from evaluations. For instance, similar evaluations of physical “beauty” can be a result of different underlying classifications (Kuipers 2015). Second, this post-Bourdieuian approach replaces the more static notion of “classification systems” and “fields,” which are easily reified into structures existing outside of people that are “reflected” in social behavior (cf. DeNora 2000, 2003), with repertoires of evaluation, boundaries, and orders of worth that are mobilized in interactions. Thus, post-Bourdieuian sociology of culture is more focused on interactions and less on institutions (cf. Kuipers, Franssen, and Holla 2019). Third, post-Bourdieuian cultural sociology follows institutional sociologists (DiMaggio 1987; Lizardo 2017) by moving away from domination and struggle as the main force in creating social order. Thus, although post-Bourdieuians are still alert to clashes and conflicts (e.g., Kuipers, Franssen, and Holla 2019), this is supplemented by attention to other moods and motivations, such as the reduction of uncertainty (Franssen and Kuipers 2013), the desire to feel “at home” (Van Dijk 2019; Boccagni and Duyvendak, this volume), or the hope to develop one’s authentic self (Arfini 2019; Schwarz 2019). Thus, the question

“what is a good something” is cast in a new light. People are not simply enacting a conflict-ridden social order. Instead, actors-in-social-action mobilize flexible repertoires to evaluate and classify.

In *Good Humor, Bad Taste* (2006), the first author developed this post-Bourdieuian approach, drawing primarily on Lamont’s work. She highlighted the simultaneity and interconnectedness of evaluation and classification in evaluations of humor. The book deals with social differences in sense of humor in the Netherlands and the US, using mostly interviews (conceptualized as joint moments of meaning-making rather than reflections of fixed “taste”). The most successful interview question in this project was: can you describe someone you know with a good sense of humor? The answers to this question moved back and forth between classification – what is a sense of humor – and evaluation – what is a person with a good sense of humor. Often, the latter blended into the even larger question of: what is a good person?

Dutch informants gave three distinct type of answers (Kuipers 2006, 68–97). A small minority said something like: someone who shares my sense of humor, who is “on my wavelength.” Close to half of informants described someone who is “the life of the party,” who “comes in and has a little joke for everyone,” who is “a lot of fun.” The remainder described persons who were witty, sharp, clever, deadpan, “not necessarily a nice person but very funny.” Thus, each group identified a different quality as central to a good sense of humor: for the first group humor was about social connection and friendship. For the second group humor was about sociability and emotional exuberance. The latter group was less concerned with the social aspect of humor, and instead located a good sense of humor in individual intellect. These qualifications are both evaluation and classification: the wide, rather ill-defined domain of humor or “things that make you laugh” is shrunken to a smaller domain of “good humor,” which is distinguished both from not-humor and other forms of humor.

These qualifications also mark social boundaries. Almost all the persons qualified as having a good sense of humor were men, suggesting that the category of “good sense of humor” is qualified as masculine (interestingly, this was less pronounced in the US). Moreover, different groups tended to produce different qualifications. The humor-as-same-wavelength answer was only given by women. The sociable humorists were preferred by women and men of working class or lower middle-class backgrounds. The witty humorists were preferred by highly-educated, upper middle-class people. Only the latter group usually made a point of contrasting their “good humor” with other kinds of humors, such as joke-telling or raucous laughter – thus producing explicit hierarchical classifications.

Although the book did not speak of qualification, we have since come to see this as the preferable term for the process – influenced by pragmatic sociology and some of the scholarship discussed in what follows. While trying to identify quality in humor, people attempt to come to terms with the general notion of “sense of humor.” Evaluation or classification are therefore not separate processes. However, like Lamont, we argue that evaluation is the preferred way to start one’s analysis from a cultural sociology perspective because it is an everyday, inescapable,

at least partly conscious practice: people cannot help but judge, and this affective experience is easily, and often willingly, shared, and thus embedded in interactions. However, this modified post-Bourdiesian approach still relies on a correspondence, if not a direct causal relation, between people's location in social structure and their individual actions. For this reason, post-Bourdiesians (like the first author) prioritize the qualification of matters of taste, morality, or other preferences that are differentiated. Another way of putting this is that cultural sociologists are most interested in fields where failure or disagreement is expected: nobody expects a joke, an artwork, or a song to be liked by everyone. Many people would not even *want* everyone to agree.

However, to fully develop a perspective on qualification as the intertwining of classifying and evaluating, we also need to look at qualifications that are not about social differentiation, variation, and taste. This takes us to (post-)actor-network theory, an approach that has developed more or less simultaneously with (post-)Bourdiesian cultural sociology, with similar interest but hardly any exchange. This approach offers, first, a theoretical understanding of qualification as socio-materially situated, processual, and performative, and, second, a deconstruction of the socio-material assemblages through which qualification processes take place. The question of qualification has led actor-network theory-scholars to scrutinize, among others, the two biggest "truths" contemporary societies have to offer: scientific truth and economic value.

Actor-network theory: music, science, energy, tomatoes, research problems, and the processes that make them value-able

Actor-network theory questions and rejects the analytical binaries on which (cultural) sociology is built: the social and the material (Law and Mol 1995), nature and culture (Latour 1993), structure and agency (Callon 1984; Law and Mol 2008), micro and macro (Callon and Latour 1981). This rejection of binaries is at the heart of this approach. One of its origin stories, written by John Law, describes the roots of actor-network theory as an "empirical post-structuralism . . . scaled-down version of Michel Foucault's discourses or epistemes" (Law 2008, 145; see also Farias, Blok, and Roberts 2020; Dodier and Barbot this volume). ANT and Bourdiesian sociology sprang from similar theoretical soil: a meeting of anthropological structuralism, Marxism, and mid-twentieth century continental philosophy. But actor-network theory takes a radically different stance toward the social. Instead of using the social to explain, they want to explain how the social comes to be (Latour 2005; cf. Schinkel 2007) This route brought forth an alternative understanding of qualification. Many ANT-inspired studies have researched processes of classification, standardization, valuation, and evaluation. But when actor-network theory scholars ask "what is a good something?" they mean: how does a something come to be and how does it come to be (valued as) good – or bad, real, true, or tasty, ugly, useful?

Where cultural sociology shows how social structures are (re)produced in social practices and preferences, actor-network theory takes the emergence and persistence of these practices and preferences as their object of study. The work of Antoine Hennion, ANT-scholar and cultural sociologist, is of particular interest here as it explicitly engages with Bourdieu's sociology of taste (Hennion and Grenier 2000; Hennion 2004). Hennion's analytical move is to shift from taste as a property of an individual, to tasting as an activity or, better, as an effect. The experience of being swept away by music, or drugs for that matter, is an effect that emerges through a particular socio-material assemblage (*dispositif*, cf Dodier and Barbot this volume). Thus, taste is an achievement at the end of a process in which all kinds of actants (objects, devices, techniques, abilities, and sensibilities) are activated to make "tasting" happen, in which we put our "taste to the test" (Hennion 2007, 98). Thus, the question becomes: what work is involved by all parties involved to achieve the experience of something – for instance music – as a good something?

Far from being trivial, the process of creating the right mood for passion, through all the practices and rituals surrounding the act of listening, must be taken seriously. This introduces again the paradoxical theme of listening as an activity, a strange mixture of active and passive. Listening is a precise and highly organized activity, but its aim is not to control something or to achieve a specific goal: on the contrary, its objective is to bring about a loss of control, an act of surrender. . . . My little actions, my idiosyncrasies, my rituals, even if they are very active, are 'meta-actions,' they affect my environment, my mood, but they cannot help me control what music can make me feel. . . . A critical [Bourdieuian] sociology focusing on the condemnation of cultural inequality has accustomed us to dismiss the appropriate description of taste as an active process, producing something specific, by means of certain collective techniques, certain types of expertise that can be studied and listed.

(Hennion 2001, 12–13)

It is clear that Hennion takes a radically different stance than Bourdieu, but how did Hennion get to this point? We trace three elements of his argument that help us appreciate the differences between the two traditions, particularly in understanding qualification as a socio-material, relational achievement, and therefore a situated process intertwined with other practices.

Networkization of the social

The first important element is the focus on relationality, what we might call the networkization and heterogenization of the social. Actor-network theory-scholars argue that the social is not purely social but rather socio-material and networked. Drawing on an empirical example of a study by Michel Callon of the development of an electric car, John Law and Annemarie Mol argue that "bits and pieces achieve

significance *in relation to others*: the electric vehicle *is* a set of relations between electrons, accumulators, fuel cells, laboratories, industrial companies, municipalities, and consumers; *it is nothing more*" (Law and Mol 1995, 276–77). What we perceive as stable social or material entities are relational effects of socio-material assemblages. They press on, arguing that entities are "constituted in the networks of which they form a part. Objects, entities, actors, processes – all are semiotic effects: network nodes are sets of relations; or they are sets of relations between relations" (Law and Mol 1995, 277). Reality is, in the end, socio-material relations all the way down. An actor is the effect of a network.

A second element of (post-)actor-network theory is the fragility of (social) entities, which are always understood a heterogeneous and thus socio-material or socio-technical in nature. Actor-network theory-scholars show how social-technical inventions fail to achieve stability (Callon 1980; Latour 1996); how stability, if achieved, is always temporary (De Laet and Mol 2000); and how much maintenance socio-material assemblages require (Denis and Pontille 2014, 2015). The commitment to symmetry between humans and non-humans (Latour 1993, 2005) is related to this point: without non-humans, social entities, would not be able to keep their shape and qualities for very long. But it also goes the other way around: in the absence of dedication, love, and care, techno-tools fall apart (Law 2002; see Mol and Hardon this volume).

The first and second element gave rise to a third important insight: the understanding of action as networked. Famously, Latour (1988) showed how the ability of Louis Pasteur to change history is the effect not of Pasteur the person, but of Pasteur the actor-network, with its ability to reveal, voice, and tame the microbes in the laboratory. This network also included hygienists who elevated Pasteur and his ability to contain the microbes and thus sanitize France. It is a heterogeneous assemblage of Pasteur, laboratory equipment, microbes, hygienists, and so forth that together make Pasteur into an immensely powerful figure. Just like the electric vehicle, Pasteur, too, was the effect of a network. And this, means that while "Pasteur" is credited with the work of Pasteurization – with protecting France against microbes – the credit should be spread out to a lot more people and other entities. This does not mean that Pasteur was only falsely "qualified" as powerful but rather that his power originated in Pasteur the actor-network.

Actor-network theory's focus on science and technology was not a coincidence. By tackling knowledge and truth, scholars addressed the social order thought to be most immune to "the social." They wanted to unpack how scientific facts, classifications (Bowker and Star 2000), standards (Timmermans and Epstein 2010), and personas are constructed as "good," that is: true (Latour and Woolgar 1979; Latour 1988). This endeavor mirrors Bourdieu's *Distinction* in terms of aiming for an object of study that was considered to not at all be the domain of the social. A crucial difference being that Latour, Callon, Law, and others were interested in understanding how the truth and stability of facts and technologies comes to be without the aim to "explain" these in terms of a correspondence to social structures.

Typical for ANT is that the debate progressed not only by further deconstruction of actors and entities but also by a constant reframing and refining of questions.

In dealing with topics like food, music, or places such as hospitals and farms, scholars like Mol, Law, and Hennion aim to further complicate Latour's question about Pasteur: "who acts? Or, who is made to be the actor?" Rather than ask *who*, their "material semiotic" approach suggests we ask: *what* occurs, and *how*? Starting from this question, these scholars developed a new conceptual repertoire, notably around attachment (Hennion 2017; Cochoy, Deville, and McFall 2017) and care (Mol, Moser, and Pols 2015). While these notions move even further beyond sociological notions agency and action, they have a clear connection with our concept of qualification.

Hennion, as we saw, used "attachment" for the process by which people listen and come to love music. Similarly, care as understood by Mol (2008; Mol and Hardon this volume) captures how people come to engage with people and things through "caring" for them. Both concepts allow for an up-close, in-depth understanding of how entities, situations, or locations, come to be qualified and experienced as "good" (or not). However, in contrast with sociological evaluations and classifications, "caring" and "attaching" are networked achievements of various entities. Moreover, this networked achievement is expressed in terms of actions and engagements rather than feelings or cognitions. This casts the question "what is a good something" in a whole new light. Both the "something" and the "good" (or not, or any other quality) come about in the process of getting attached or through the activity of caring. Therefore, the entities being qualified are not the *reason* or *cause* for attaching or caring (e.g., DeNora 2000; Heuts and Mol 2013). Neither is there an external, social explanation for how people qualify. Instead, both the classification and the evaluation emerge from, and are actively achieved within, a situated "actor-network."

Qualifications need work and do work

When actor-network theory branched out in the 1990s it most successfully turned to economics, markets, prices, and economic value (Callon 1998). In market settings qualifications are often related to establishing monetary value through valuation and related processes such as calculation (Callon and Muniesa 2005), qualculation (Cochoy 2008; Callon and Law 2005), valorization (Vatin 2013), and, more recently, capitalization (Muniesa et al. 2017) and assetization (Birch 2017). All such valuations occur through specific socio-technical assemblages, described as *agencements* or market devices (Callon, Mollo, and Muniesa 2007; Velthuis this volume). Again, ANT purposefully engages not with "soft" valuations, like morality and aesthetics, but they tackle the "hardest" values: monetary worth, that is, presumably "real" economic value. They ask, for instance: how does marketization happen? (Çalişkan and Callon 2009, 2010) Qualifications of various kind play a central role in the emergence and continuous functioning of a market. To be able to consume, consumers ask the question "what is a good something" all the time (Callon, Méadel, and Rabeharisoa 2002). In contemporary consumer society, the question "what is a good something?" often presents itself as "is this something worth my money?" Being able to ask (and answer) this question relies on a socio-technical assemblage

in which persons are positioned, as consumers, to engage in specific ways of qualifying. Bringing about such an assemblage that allows for qualification to take place effectively does not happen naturally or automatically.

Qualification, in markets and elsewhere, needs work, care, and maintenance. This becomes evident in recent studies on emerging markets related to energy transitions, such as the marketization of wind power in China (Kirkegaard and Çalışkan 2019) low carbon heat networks in the UK (Webb and Hawkey 2017), or energy retrofit products, such as solar panels, in the Netherlands (de Wilde 2019, 2020). De Wilde shows that practices in this new market for products such as solar panels rest on the work by what she calls mediators of trust, such as official standards or professional expertise. These mediators shape the possibilities and situations that make qualification possible and thus ensure that homeowners feel confident in their attempts to qualify products, and thus to buy them (see also Karpik 2010). However, establishing a new socio-technical assemblage for qualification and exchange is difficult. Homeowners drop out because they are not able to qualify products well, and thus a market does not emerge. By focusing on a case where qualification, and thus marketization, fails, this type of study pushes us to ask how the socio-technical assemblages that constitute markets are maintained. It leads to tell “care-infused market tales” (de Wilde 2020), that detail the work that goes into socio-technical assemblages rather than blow the trumpet (but not follow the trail) of innovation (see also Callon 1980; Latour 1996). The question of qualification thus leads us to investigate the question of maintenance: what socio-technical assemblages are involved in making qualification take place and when, how, and by whom are they kept in place (Denis and Pontille 2014, 2015).

Looking back to our examples of listening to music, establishing a scientific persona, and, just now, establishing markets we learn that qualification as a process is entangled in practices of listening, knowing, and commodifying. Moreover, qualification relies on socio-material or socio-technical assemblages and qualifications that never come about in an abstract or general sense. The material semiotics question of “what occurs and how” allows us to understand the situational production of qualities, without implying these are “small” or “local” (e.g., Callon and Latour 1981; Knorr Cetina and Bruegger 2002; Callon and Law 2005) Instead, qualifications do performative work. When asking questions, or trying to make up one’s mind, or deliberating about “good somethings,” something is *made*. Thus, qualifications do not reflect socio-material assemblages, but they sustain them. Qualifications thus both need work and do work: entities are shaped, made, and sustained through qualification.

Registers, regimes, assemblages: a post-ANT turn toward stabilization and qualification

Actor-network theory gradually became interested in cases where more than one type of value – aesthetic, scientific, economic – is dominant. Where Lamont highlighted

different “repertoires of evaluation” and pragmatic sociologists focused on “orders of worth,” actor-network theory-scholars theorized registers of valuing or “valuation regimes.” Such registers or regimes operate simultaneously in relation to an entity or situation, thus shaping them in various ways. We focus on two recent examples of studies that focus on a research question very similar to “what is a good something?” Both studies help us articulate how different qualifications interact, and how foregrounding particular “qualities” or “values” shapes reality, in this case tomatoes and biomedical research topics.

Heuts and Mol (2013) ask the question “what is a good tomato?” to study the *valuing* of tomatoes in practice. They identified different “registers of valuing,” such as money, naturalness, and how tomatoes can be handled (for instance, if they are easy to transport). Crucially, these registers are often present in the same situation (e.g., when buying a tomato in the supermarket, when growing tomatoes, etc.), and they interrelate not only with practices but with forms of care: growing, cooking, and eating. In these practices, the “good tomato” is actively valued, and thus: shaped. Retelling the tale of the Heinz tomato they write:

If such a tomato does not yet exist, it has to be invented. This, then, is what the Heinz company has done – and it has patented the seeds. The relevant experts among our informants seem proud of it: ‘A tomato has to have a high viscosity. Therefore, if you squeeze in a Heinz Tomato only a bit of juice will come out. It is very beefy, so that you can make a good, thick ketchup with it. It also has a high sugar content, for the sweeter the tomato itself, the less sweetener you have to add. And it has to be sturdy, too, for you have to be able to transport it.’ As tomatoes are not given, good tomatoes are not given either. And in the process of developing them, divergent qualities and requirements may be tinkered with in combination.

(Heuts and Mol 2013, 138)

In developing a Heinz tomato, particular qualities and requirements are foregrounded (sweet, beefy), that align with “good” ketchup in terms of its liquidity and taste. At the same time other values, such as money, come into play: the Heinz tomato needs to be good in terms of the process of making and selling a ketchup that consumers will consider a “good” ketchup in terms of registers of valuing they employ when shopping such as money, taste, and naturalness. Registers of valuing thus come and go together within specific, situated, practices.

Consider a second example. In a study on biomedical scientists, Rushforth, Franssen, and de Rijcke (2019) asked: what is a good biomedical research topic? They explore how scientists navigate two regimes of worth that order scientific practices in biomedical research and are often seen as conflicting: the regimes of academic excellence and of patient relevance. Principal investigators of biomedical research groups want to secure funding for their research group. For them, whether a research topic is “good” not only depends on whether the researcher finds it an interesting problem or something that might produce “useful” knowledge, but

whether others will qualify the research problem as good, so they can accumulate scientific and economic capital from the study.

Regimes of worth in academia are engrained in a wider socio-technical assemblage through which capitalization can take place. The regime of “academic excellence” (Rushforth, Franssen, and de Rijcke 2019), for instance, shapes job application procedures, funding arrangements, and editorial decisions and drives on bibliometric indicators like journal impact factor and the h-index. For principal investigators scientific inquiry that latches on to, and allows itself to be reconfigured through the lens of academic excellence is the safe choice because it guarantees that research generates economic capital (Fochler 2016). A “good” topic is one that leads to results that will be qualified as academically innovative or excellent and can be published in the “good” journals, “good” being those with a high journal impact factor. But what if one wants to study rare diseases? For a study on a rare disease to support capital accumulation it has to be made interesting beyond the disease itself. A principal investigator explains:

What I also believe is that some of these [rare] diseases are very interesting also intellectually so you can have a huge impact because there is a certain mechanism or something that can help in the end a lot of people and ‘a lot of science.’

(Rushforth, Franssen, and de Rijcke 2019, 218)

The quote shows that turning questions about a rare disease into a “good research problem” means: expanding it to help more patients and more scientists, for more academic and clinical “impact.” In the lab two, related, rare diseases were studied, one where there was a steady supply of patient samples, which allows for larger, conceptually more interesting studies, while the second rare disease is so rare the patient samples are limited. Consequently, the principal investigator cannot draw on the academic excellence regime to develop rare disease two into an interesting, and fundable, topic. However, patient organizations are interested. Thus, getting applied clinical research problems funded through such organizations is possible. The principal investigator hopes that, in time, she has assembled a large enough network (of patient organizations, patients, expertise, staff, etc.) that she might be able to build-up large enough samples to answer conceptual and basic research questions based on rare disease two.

The studies discussed in this section approach the question “what is a good something” by looking at situations, moments, and processes in which these good somethings are “done” in practice. To qualify a research topic as good is also to shape it to become good in a particular register of value; to qualify a tomato is also to shape the tomato. This means that different qualities or values, different notions of good, bring about different research topics and different tomatoes. Thus, they show the performative effects of qualification: qualifications bring about the social, the bring about a situation, and thus they bring out reality itself.

These studies also bring to the fore how socio-material assemblages constitute the space or the “infrastructure” in which qualification takes place (see also Dodier and Barbot, this volume and Velthuis, this volume). For instance, the studies of regimes of worth in academia push us to consider the extensive material infrastructure that is required to “rank” papers, scholars, and universities or that enables one to capitalize on being “academically excellent.” In this (post)actor-network approach, the actor-networks, with their many human and non-actants, often emerge as “assemblage” or “infrastructure.” This conceptualization highlights the (relative) durability of such constellations, particularly of non-human actants, also across situations. Thus, the theoretical work this conceptualization does is not unlike the notion of “institution” in sociology: it captures that, and how, things may remain stability across situations, even when none of the same “actants” are around. However, for post-ANT, this stability is a puzzle rather than a given (Rubio 2014). The work on maintenance and care goes even further to highlight the inherent material fragility of such socio-material assemblages (Mol and Hardon, this volume). Thus, while some post-actor-networks theorists attempt to solve the puzzle of stabilization through such notions as “assemblage” or “infrastructure,” others dismiss the notion of stability entirely, arguing that socio-material assemblages of qualification always, constantly, require care and maintenance.

Qualification and the art of asking good questions, or: what, when, how, for, with, and against whom is a good something?

What is a good something? In this chapter, we argue that this is a good research question, or rather: a template for research questions. Although academics typically formulate their questions in more complicated ways, many studies in recent decades have asked versions of “what is a good something”: questions about value, taste, worth, prices, qualities, valuing, valuations, evaluations, classifications, calculations, and justifications, on topics ranging from paintings, music, people, jokes, academics, and politics to engines, tomatoes, solar panels, penicillin, and research questions. Because these studies are rooted in different disciplines and research traditions, they are rarely aware of each other. Importing yet another academic term from France, we argue that all these studies focus on a similar process: qualification.

Qualification, for us, is the social process that happens when people, jointly or individually, quickly or over a protracted period of deliberation and consideration, try to assess “what is a good something.” This is a dual process: qualification is an entangled, indivisible combination of classifying – what sort of entity is this? – and evaluating – is it a successful example of this category or not? Does it have quality? Is it value-able? As we have shown here, such qualifications are not without consequences. For cultural sociologists, they are pivotal to the making and remaking of the social order, and all the relations, deliberations, hierarchies, struggles, exclusions, inequalities, power balances, and boundaries that make up social life. For

(post)actor-network theorists, qualification is less about producing relations than about shaping realities. Qualification is an achievement of situated networks that shape and reshape entities: human, non-human, situations, locations. Consequently, qualifications are performative: they make reality. While qualifying “somethings” as having some sort of quality, people and other actants jointly bring about the social and material world – from tomatoes to academic publications.

Our focus on qualification allows us to do three things at once. First, it directs our attention to an important social process that can be observed across all domains of social life. All entities we encounter – things, people, situations, ideas, relations – need to be qualified and requalified: we attempt to establish what it is, if it is any good, and if, and how, to engage with it. We argue that a seemingly simple question: “what is a good something” will steer our gaze to such processes of qualification. We borrow this trick of asking a naïve-sounding question to access theoretical processes from actor-network theory. One of the hallmarks of this approach is its use of innocuous-looking questions “who acts?” or “what occurs?” to open the way to radical deconstructions of everyday understandings, not only of social life, but of reality itself.

Second, looking for this process of qualification allows us to ask good research questions. As our survey of empirical work showed, studying “good somethings” and how they occur in various situations has proven a productive avenue for research for almost 40 years now. We believe that our new conceptualization of qualification as the situated entanglement of classification and evaluation will yield novel insights that go beyond the empirical cases under consideration. In this chapter, it has allowed us to see connections and commonalities between such diverse phenomena as science and art, research topics and humor, tomatoes and solar panels. Rather than a research question itself, “what is a good something” is a template for a research question that allows us to connect and compare similar processes across situations and settings. It allows us to see new things and to see old things in a new light. This, in our view, is what makes a good question to guide research.

Finally, our focus on qualification allows us to bridge two fields, or more precisely: two theoretical approaches that are strongly associated, though not synonymous with, a specific field. Although there are other cultural sociologies, cultural sociology is profoundly influenced by (post-)Bourdieuian theory; and although there many ways of doing science and technology studies, the field is strongly shaped by actor-network theory. While we don’t feel that bridging fields is always necessarily a good something, this particular bridging seems to us useful and productive. Both approaches offer different, in our view mostly complementary, ways of looking at qualification as practice, process, and performance. Taken together, they strongly resonate with recent developments in pragmatic inquiry.

(Post-)Bourdieuian sociology teaches us that it is important to ask *for whom* and *against whom* things are “good somethings,” and *by whom* and *how* they are (re) produced. Which boundaries are enacted when and where by positioning a person or thing as good or bad? What classifications systems are upheld by our categorizations? How do evaluations position persons and things vis-à-vis wider societal

relations? This also focuses our attention on clashes and conflicts: who gains, who loses, from these good somethings? This approach gives us analytical categories that allow us to analyze (literally “loosen” or “untie”) qualifications, as made up of two processes that are practically indivisible but analytically distinct: classification and evaluation. From there, cultural sociology gives us other analytical tools to see how such evaluations and classifications are connected with larger constellations, such as fields, repertoires, classification systems, structures of dominations, even nations or world systems.

From actor-network theory we learn that asking “what is a good something?” allows us, and demands from us, to be specific: to ask when, where, and how something is “a good something.” Something is never good in the abstract. Instead, all qualities, and thus all qualifications, are grounded in relations and situations. Moreover, ANT leads us to seek for the socio-material assemblage through which “a good something” comes to be, including its non-human actants. It leads us to ask, time and time again, how both the “good” and the “something” in the question “a good something” gain their momentary shape in this process. The most precise rendering of the question about qualification now would go something like: *What, when, how, for whom is a good something in this particular situation?*

Although these two approaches have often operated separately, or even antagonistically, we find the commonalities between these approaches striking. This might be more evident to sociologists than to actor-network theorists. While ANT scholars have worked hard to distinguish itself from cultural or critical sociology (e.g., Hennion and Grenier 2000; Hennion 2004; Schinkel 2007), cultural sociologists have been more preoccupied with distinguishing themselves from other sociologists.

The commonality comes from the strong focus on *relationality*. In both approaches, all qualities are established in the context of relations between people and people, or people and things. (Schinkel 2007; cf. Elias 1978; Emirbayer 1997; Kilminster 2007; Heinich 2020). Thus, notions like quality, but also truth, beauty, art, or indeed reality are the result of (social) relations. This theoretical or ontological stance leads researchers to question “somethings” and the “qualities” attributed or attached to them. Moreover, both approaches share a radical commitment to empiricism. In the relational perspective, constructivism has never lapsed into subjectivism or relativism. Instead, it has produced a refusal to accept absolutist or universalist claims about people, societies, or indeed “the social.” In ANT, this refusal has been most categorical. This is the reason for ANT’s rejection of sociological categories like fields, structure, class, culture, society, and other things that are “larger than life.” The same radically empirical stance also rejects things that are “smaller than life”: notions like classification, evaluation, habitus, and other invisible things that purportedly are lodged within people’s minds and bodies.

This is where the biggest divergence between the two approaches lie: the view on the status and usefulness of abstract analytical concepts. Moreover, while both approaches are relational, they don’t see relations in the same way. In cultural sociology, what configures these relations are large-scale entities: institutions, classes, genders, nations, fields. In ANT, scale is a performative effect of a socio-material

assemblage (Callon and Latour 1981): what configures entities, situations, and practices is the relations between actants enrolled in them. Therefore, ANT's analytical strategy is to look situationally at anything, be it a tomato, a market, or modernity itself (Latour 1993). This does not mean that these relations are necessarily small or local: they may extend over large distances in time and space.

However, in recent years, advances have been made from both sides. Post-Bourdieuists increasingly stress situations and negotiations. The turn to institutional theory, and later to pragmatic sociology, with its infusion of American pragmatism, has made cultural sociology less structuralist, less concerned with issues of power and domination. Moreover, (cultural) sociologists have become more attentive to the importance of materiality (e.g., Griswold, Mangione, and McDonnell 2013; Zubrzycki 2017), although they usually insist on a firm analytical divide between human and non-human actors (e.g., Battentier and Kuipers 2020). At the same time, ANT scholars have looked for new conceptualizations to capture the durability of actor-networks, also across larger distances and wider networks, without falling into the trap of inventing non-empirical reifications. This has led to the adoption of some of the terms we saw here: assemblages, devices, infrastructures, regimes, and registers. Here, we see the fields moving closer: sociologists less comfortable with things larger than life, ANT scholars working toward a vocabulary to analyze "institutionalized" or momentarily "stabilized" actor-networks such as markets.

What has made these advancements possible is not the common roots of these approaches. It is the fact that they have a common opponent: methodological individualism. Predictably, actor-network theory has been more radical than cultural sociology. But in both cases, the agenda was not only to "unmask" beauty, art, science, markets, and other truths and realities but also to "unmask" the individual. In the end, relational social theory means an assault on the individual, as a commonsensical notion that still haunts the social sciences, from economics to psychology.

Making the question "what is a good something" the starting point of empirical research entails, first, a negation of the notion of quality, or "good things" as something outside of (social) relations. Second, it entails a negation of the notion of entities, or "somethings" outside of (social) relations. Eventually, this leads to a negation of the notion of individuals outside of the social. Foregrounding the question "what is a good something" as a starting point of social science research takes issue with the notion of the *Homo Clausus* (Elias 1978). Individuals do not make "good somethings." Things do not make "good somethings." But relations make "good somethings." To evaluate, to classify, to judge, to value, to assess, to listen, to care, or to attach is to develop and sustain relations.

Notes

- 1 We want to acknowledge the comments, suggestions, and inspiration of the many people who helped formulate our thoughts on this topic: the editors, John R. Bowen, Nicolas Dodier, Jan Willem Duyvendak, Anita Hardon, and all the members of the Transatlantic

Forum, especially Michele Lamont; Annemarie Mol, Olav Velthuis and the colleagues at the “Qualification in Practice” seminars at the University of Amsterdam; the members of the Science and Evaluation Studies Seminar at Leiden University, especially Sarah de Rijcke; Andy Battentier, Henrik Fürst, Anastasiya Halauniova, Nathalie Heinrich, Mandy de Wilde; and the students of the University of Amsterdam research master’s course “Culture, Value, Power.”

- 2 In both fields we are discussing there is a strong relation, at least originally, between a (sub) discipline and a theoretical approach. In this text, we try to conceptually separate this. We refer to the subdisciplines as respectively cultural sociology and science and technology studies (STS, sometimes ANT-based STS). When talking specifically about the theoretical approach, we speak of Bourdieusian or post-Bourdieusian cultural sociology; and of actor-network theory or post-actor-network theory. As we will see, both approaches eventually moved beyond the subdisciplines. We also refer to pragmatic sociology or pragmatic inquiry, a theoretical approach that has strong affinities with the approach developed here: it incorporates elements of post-Bourdieusian theory, actor-network theory, and American pragmatism.

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