A conceptual framework for logical (original) institutionalism

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1.1 Introduction

The definition of what an institution is and what constitutes its emergence and continuity, have been an issue for much academic thinking during the last 200 years. From philosophers such as Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx to the more contemporary works of organisational theorist Richard W. Scott, the notion of structures and institutions have played an intricate role in understanding human social dispositions and practical behaviour in their respective contemporary societies.

But the term institution has come to be differently interpreted and understood depending on which theoretical strand academic scholars adheres to. There is a tendency within literature on institutionalism to be very vague when discussing institutions and its constituents. In an

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attempt to include everything into the definition and meaning of institution it becomes eviscerated and inevitably means nothing.

A comprehensive understanding of what constitutes institutions furthermore requires an explanation of how these connect to the surrounding social systems of contemporary societies. In the feat of maintaining a viable construct of institutions, I therefore integrate structuration theory as proposed by Giddens (1976, 1979; 1984 see also) and the institutional logics perspective as introduced by Friedland and Alford (see also Alford & Friedland, 1985; 1991) with original institutional economics. As I will show, such integration overcomes some of the inherent paradoxes and contradictions of (neo)-institutional theory (e.g. the paradox of agency) and allows for much more plurality to be introduced into the framework.

This remaining part of this chapter contains a brief overview and discussion about different theoretical strands of institutionalism. This part is important in order to recognise the difference between studies that claims to enact institutional theory. The institutionalism that emerged within economics during the 1970’s is far removed from the institutionalism that is presented in this thesis. In connection with this discussion of different theoretical strands I also present the definition of institution as I enact it in this thesis. In the sections following this I will present (1) the structural perspective and (2) the agency perspective. The presentation of the structural perspective contains much of structuration theory as proposed by Giddens and lays out the essential building blocks of the interrelationship between social systems and institutions in society. The definitions of social systems, structures and institutions are discussed and analytically separated in this section. The agency perspective contains a thorough discussion of original institutional economics as influenced by Thorsten Veblen. The concept of instincts, habits, habits of thought and action together with the essential notion of taken-for-granted assumptions are defined in this section. An important part of this section is the distinction made between taken-for-granted assumptions and deliberation and the discussion
on structural embeddedness, path dependency and situated practices. Another important part of this section is the plurality and heterogeneity added from the institutional logics perspective.

The primary aim of this chapter is to present an analytical model for understanding how actors create meaning of conflicting institutions. A secondary aim, however, is to construct a framework of logical (original) institutionalism that challenges previous literature on the subject. In this chapter I will therefore present a coherent and explicit framework of institutionalism\(^2\), where the definition of institution is connected, and interdependent, with structures and social systems.

1.2 Theoretical strands of institutional theory

The use of institutional theory has come to a renaissance during the last 30 years. With the publications of Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), institutionalism got a boost within research focusing primarily on organisations. Meyer and Rowan (1977) showed how formal organisations would form around myths and ceremonies, invoked by institutional rules, in order to maintain legitimacy to external environments. But they also showed that the formal organisational structure could become decoupled from the actual actions within the organisation. That is, the actual processes within organisations could differ from the rhetoric or façade that the organisation portrayed to the outside. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) drew on this work and could show that there exists isomorphic processes, caused by endeavours for external legitimacy and resource dependency, causing changes in formal organisational structures. Isomorphic processes served as an explanation to why different organisations became more and more alike. The DiMaggio and Power research came to contrast some of the previous dominant functionalist approaches of (sociological) institutionalism, such as the work of e.g. Karl Marx, Talcott Parsons, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber, rendering it the label New Institutional Sociology (henceforth NIS). It has been argued (Scott, 2008, p. 89) that NIS takes,

\(^2\) Jepperson (1991, p. 153) writes that “Institutionalism is a theoretical strategy that features institutional theories and seeks to develop and apply them” (emphasis in original).
as its main departure, an external perspective to organisations, focusing on world systems, societies, and organisational fields. This theoretical strand argues against previous theories, which stated that organisations adapt to their technical environment, under rationality, in order to advance activities within the organisation (cf. Blau, 1972; Perrow, 1965, 1970; Thompson, 1967; Woodward, 1965).

During the same time period as NIS came to surface amongst sociologists, the late 1970’s and 1980’s economics where reviving institutionalism within their field. This feat has generally come to be attributed to the American economist, and 2009 Nobel laureate, Oliver Williamson (1975, 1985) and his transaction cost theory\(^3\). This strand of institutionalism came to be labelled New Institutional Economics\(^4\) (henceforth NIE), and emphasized the importance of the individual in social systems. It has been argued (Hodgson, 2004, pp. 5-6) that research within a NIE perspective carries two important characteristics that separates it from the earlier institutionalism within economics. Firstly, NIE research focuses on explaining institutions from an actor perspective. Secondly, research within NIE have a tendency to explain the survival of certain institutions due to their ability to lower transaction costs relative alternative institutions.

Original Institutional Economics\(^5\) (henceforth OIE) stems from late 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) century scholars such as American economists Thorsten Veblen (a heavy contributor to the theoretical field), John R. Commons and Clarence E. Ayers as well as American pragmatists such as Charles Sanders Pierce, William James and John Dewey. OIE draws on nature and evolution theory (Darwinism) in exploring the creation of key institutions. The main theoretical influences comes

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\(^3\) Williamson has claimed that he drew on the works of John R. Common in stipulating a new form of institutional theory for economics.

\(^4\) It has, however, been argued that what Williamson produced might have been new, but not very institutional (cf. Dugger, 1990)

\(^5\) Original Institutional Economics is sometimes referred to as old institutional economics, but proponents, myself included, of the theoretical strand rejects this description as it carries connotations of being out of date.
from (sociological) Marxism, the German historical school, American pragmatist philosophy, and instinct-habit psychology (cf. Hodgson, 2004, p. 7). OIE shares with NIE its focus on organisations and subsystems, but goes even further into the organisation and studies the actors and their connections with, and reifications of, institutions. This theoretical strand rejects some of the core ontological and methodological assumption of NIE (cf. Scapens, 1994) and:

[r]ecognise that individuals operate in a specific social setting in which institutionalised rules and values, rather than some principle of rationality, often shape behaviour” (Ribeiro & Scapens, 2006, p. 98)

NIE and OIE takes on an internal perspective, focusing on organisations and their subsystems (Scott, 2008, p. 89). The main difference between NIE and OIE, arguably both claiming an internal perspective of organisations, is stated quite clearly in following citation by Dugger (1990, p. 424): "[i]nstitutionalism explains the process of continual change while 'new institutionalism' explains the structure of the optimal state”. The importance of process (or path dependency as I will describe further on) is demarcating OIE from NIS as well. Where OIE focuses on the emergence or continuity of institutions, NIS tends to take them as 'given' (cf. Burns, 2000). In the following text I will draw heavily on OIE as a basic foundation for understanding institutions.

Institutions are generally described as historically and socially constructed patterns of thoughts and actions, embedded and habitualised in society, creating boundaries for perceptions or viable options from an actor perspective. In this respect, institutions are quite often understood as constraints positioned around actors with an effect of hampering or even hindering. But it is as likely that institutions create possibilities that encourage actors to a number of actions. An inherent problem with the NIS strand of institutionalism is that it has come to include anything remotely connected to human behaviour as institutions. By enacting OIE as a fundamental building block in this thesis, such flaws are overcome as definitions become clearer and more stringently used.
From my perspective, and subsequently used in this thesis, institutions are defined and understood as *taken-for-granted assumptions, located as memory traces, formed through habits of thought and action, that transforms into a path dependent continuous patterning of situated practices.*

1.3 The structural perspective

The structural perspective, as I present it here, largely draws on Giddens (1984) structuration theory as he presents it in his now seminal book “The Constitution of Society”. Giddens combined earlier functionalist perspectives on institutions (e.g. Parsons, 1937, 1951) with structuralist and post-structuralist perspectives (e.g. Althusser & Balibar, 1971; Marx, 1976 [1867], 2010 [1858]) in order to constitute a more holistic approach to social theory. Giddens ideas on how society is constructed pioneered a lot of sociological research on society and social systems as it allowed for more deliberation and less predestination of actors. In this thesis, I make use of structuration theory as a basis for understanding how institutions come to be produced and reproduced continuously over time and space.

Structuration theory have been readily used in order to take more of an internal or micro-perspective when advocating studies of how practice (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Macintosh & Scapens, 1990; Scapens & Macintosh, 1996), routines (Burns & Scapens, 2000; van der Steen, 2007) and technologies (Orlikowski, 1992, 2000, 2007; Scapens & Jazayeri, 2003) become established and institutionalised in organisations.

1.3.1 Structures, rules and, resources

Drawing on the works of Giddens (1976, 1979, 1984) social systems and structures can be analytically separated. The former is the very foundation of societies as these are built on the presence of a social system. The social system is in place to make certain that (tacit) knowhow on how to interact with other individuals in a specific social context is in place. That is, the social system defines how interactions between actors can, or should, proceed. Inherent in this system of (tacit) knowhow is the existence of rules and resources which serves as structuring
properties of social relations (Giddens, 1984, p. 17). Structuring properties, referred to as structures, enables a binding of time and space, fundamentally allowing for similar patterns of social practices to emerge independent of time. This means that we can find certain social practices (e.g. the ceremony of greeting by reciprocal handshakes within western culture or bowing within Japanese culture) to exist in different times and at different geographic places.

As I have already mentioned, structural properties builds on the existence of rules and resources. Starting with rules, Giddens (1984, pp. 17-18) states that there is a risk of “misinterpretation because of certain dominant uses of ‘rules’ in the philosophical literature”. He states that rules within structuration theory are not like rules within games (where they normally formalise prescriptions of right and wrong). Rules are a web of connections rather than a sum of individuals, meaning that a single rule cannot be connected to a single instance of behaviour in social life. Rather, the entire web of rules has to be taken into consideration when analysing behaviour. Rules is in many ways the manner in which things ‘should’ be done. Metaphorically, rules within structures are the informal protocol for social relations.

Resources, on the other hand, should be understood as fundamental capacities to transform the current situation. That is, resources are the modes through which social relation can change from the start. Giddens (1984, p. 33) distinguishes between two types of resources. Firstly, allocative resources that refer to instructions that has commanding effects over material objects. Secondly, authoritative resources that refer to instructions that has commanding effects over actors.

Rules as part of structural properties carry two different aspects. Firstly, rules should be understood as the constitution of meaning of social action. Secondly, rules should be understood as sanctioning specific sets of social relations. Meaning and sanctioning helps actors make sense of how social relations play out within social systems.

It would be fallacious to portray rules as distinctly separated from resources. In fact, rules and resources are interdependent variables in a continuous structuration of social systems.
Whereas rules connect meaning (constitutive rules) and sanction to social relations, resources have to be enacted in order to actually transform the social relation. Without instructions to command material objects on the one hand or actors on the other hand (i.e. allocative or authoritative resources), rules would prove to be tentative at best.

Finally, there is a distinction between tacit and coded rules. Coded rules are those rules that refer to specific actions of social relations. Primarily we will find such coded rules within judicial law-making or bureaucratic standardisation. Giddens (1984, p. 21) states that such coded rules “give verbal expression to what is supposed to be done”. The transformation of tacit into coded rules comes, however, with a price. As formulation takes place the tacit rules becomes connected to a specific type of action or context and thereby looses its generalizability. Giddens (1984, p. 21) therefore states that “[f]ormulated rules [...] are thus codified interpretations of rules rather than rules as such”. Not to make this distinction is to fall into the trap of conflating the different aspects of rules in social relations, fundamentally simplifying the complexity of structural properties in social systems.

1.3.2 The duality of structure – or structure-agency relationships

A central theme in structuration theory is the notion of duality of structure. But before the duality of structure is presented two propositions about the structure-agency relationship have to be made.

Firstly, institutions are dependent on actors. As institutions are socially constructed (cf. Berger & Luckman, 1967), they require actors for the on-going reproduction of their properties. If actors were to stop, intentionally or unintentionally, drawing on structural properties of rules and resources, the institution would no longer have any time-space effect, thus cease to exist. Having said this, it should be duly noted that any form of methodological individualism is
rejected. Methodological individualism asserts the actor as the explanans of institutions (explanandum)⁶.

Secondly, actors are dependent on institutions. Without the existence of institutions, understood as embedded structural properties, chaos would govern society. One could even go so far as to state that there would be no society, only individuals, living their solitary lives without the knowledge of how to interact with other individuals. However, we must not let ourselves fall into the trap of methodological collectivism, where institutions are asserted the explanans of the actor (explanandum).

The duality of structure within structuration theory reflects these two propositions. Thereby structuration theory separates itself from previous standpoints of methodological collectivism (where the totality of society and structures solely affect actors) and methodological individualism (where actors affects the surrounding society and its structures). Contrary to these positions, structuration theory argues that there is an on-going process of production and re-production of structures through actors’ enactment of agency. That is, structural properties in the form of rules and resources simultaneously constrain and enable behaviour at an actor level. As actors draw on rules and resources available to them they facilitate a form of sense in their everyday activities. But they also reinforce the structural properties, by reproducing it, so that “succeeding” actors can draw on a progressed version of it. In this process both the actor and the structural properties are constructed as the “producer” of the other; hence duality.

A third proposition of the structure-agency relationship, however, has to be made. Drawing on Hodgson (2004, pp. 179-181) and the Veblen institutionalism, I propose that institutions have temporal priority over any one individual actor. This implies that structures are already in place

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⁶ Explanations are logically divided into sets of (1) explanans and (2) explanandum. An explanandum is a phenomenon that needs to be explained and an explanans forms that explanation. These concepts were constructed by Hempel and Oppenheim (1948) in an attempt of answering questions of why rather than what.
within the social system prior to the actor\(^7\). That is, actors are introduced into an already constructed institution that s/he has to cope with. This proposition partly rejects Giddens notion of structure and actor being simultaneously conjoined in an on-going process of production and reproduction (i.e. the duality of structure). It does, however, not exclude the possibilities of changing current institutions, but it does regulate the starting point (Hodgson, 2004, p. 39 see also p. 180). In other words, change is possible but it is not up to the individual actor to actively choose the starting point of change.

Burns and Scapens (2000, pp. 9-10) drawing on the work of Barley and Tolbert (1997) included this proposition in their framework of accounting institutionalisation. From the Burns and Scapens perspective, institutions have a diachronically effect, meaning that actors reproduce structural properties by drawing on the cumulative structural effects over time. In other words, institutions affect actors with the full impact of history, but actors affect institutions with (only) the impact of the present of their action. From this perspective, actors are path dependent and “history matters” (Hodgson, 1999, p. 139).

Fundamentally this third proposition implies that I accept structuration theory as proposed by Giddens (1984) but with the alternation of temporal priority of structures and institutions over any one individual, adding a time dimension to the realms of institutions and actions (cf. Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Burns & Scapens, 2000). As Berger and Pullberg (1966, pp. 63, emphasis in original) states it:

> Social structure is encountered by the individual as an external facticity. It is there, impervious to his wishes, sovereignly other than himself, an alien thing opaque to his understanding.

The duality of structure, though here altered with the implications of temporal priority, implies that the dichotomisation of actors and institutions or micro and macro are fallacious. Such a

\(^7\) This argument is in line with some of the general critique against Giddens structuration theory as formulated by critical realists such as Roy Bhaskar and Margaret Archer.
positioning would render institutions a “real” objectivity, which, of course, is deceptive. Englund and Gerdin (2011, p. 589) put it rather accurately when stating that:

[...] we propose a view on duality that represents a flat ontology. That is, it repudiates the idea that social structure may be ‘external’ to, and independent of individuals, as well as the idea that it can be organized along different levels such as ‘macro’ and ‘micro’. Along the same lines, it is also local in the sense that social structure per se exists only in the minds of individual agents who reproduce it in, and through, the situated (inter-)actions in particular time/space locations.

Institutions are inherently human constructs but might be perceived as an objective reality. This does not lead to a theoretical justification of such objectivity. Rather, my perception of the relationship between actors and institutions, is that it represents a flat and local ontology (cf. Englund & Gerdin, 2011; Englund, Gerdin, & Burns, 2011).

1.3.3 The social construction of structures and institutions

Drawing on structuration theory (Giddens, 1984 p. 17), I have above defined how structural properties, constituted as rules and resources, are constituted as structures within a social system. But the notion of institution, in connection with social systems and structures, needs more unpacking to become clear. The definition that Giddens invokes is to ascribe those structural properties that are firmly embedded in the social system, causing the greatest time-space effect, as institutions.

Berger and Luckman (1967) contribute tremendously to (sociological) institutionalism in their seminal work “The social construction of reality”. They argue that the self-consciousness perceives reality as an orderly existence and that language functions as an amplifier of that reality. Furthermore, they argue that this order is projected upon the world through inter-

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8 The enactment of a flat and local ontology separates as well structuration theory as OIE from literature within the NIS-field. Because of the rejection of micro-macro-relations, adhering rather to a flat ontology, the OIE and NIS are not coming together, which have been suggested in some strands of institutional literature (e.g. Hirsch & Lounsbury, 1997). Rather, this means that OIE and NIS are fundamentally different since they are aligning to different ontological perceptions.
subjective reasoning. The individual actors’ perception of the reality could then be either (1) altered or (2) reinforced as a result from other actors’ inter-subjective reasoning.

Berger and Pullberg (1966, pp. 60-61) explains this process with the use of four terms: (1) objectivation, (2) alienation, (3) objectification, and (4) reification. Actors’ subjectivity is embodied in the human product (social structures and institutions), becoming an inherent part of their world (objectivation). Actors then distance themselves (alienation) from these human products so that they can perceive them as an object (objectification). Finally, as the distance increases between the actor’s subjective construction and the perception of an objective phenomenon, through an on-going reproduction, the notion of the human construct become perceived as a worldly reality (reification). Or as Silverman (1970, p. 134) argues:

We reify society if we regard it as having an existence which is separate from and above the actions of men: social roles and institutions exists only as an expression of the meanings which men attach to their world.

In other words, individuals engage in conversations with other actors and negotiate a shared picture of their reality (cf. Barley & Tolbert, 1997, p. 94). As these pictures of reality become reproduced time after another, they form into assumptions of the world. Firmly embedded, these assumptions will then be taken-for-granted by the actors who share them (cf. Burns & Scapens, 2000, p. 8) to a degree where thoughts and actions becomes habits that shape the manner in which they think and act (cf. Ribeiro & Scapens, 2006, pp. 97-98). Institutions forms to be “a social order or pattern that has attained a certain state or property” (Jepperson, 1991, p. 145).

Institutions are furthermore non-material. As such it exists only in the memory traces, transformed through a continuous patterning of situated practices (Giddens, 1984, p. 377). But this is not the same as to say that institutions are the patterns of situated practices. The implication is that institutions can only be observed as actors enact structural properties in their everyday life. Institutions become transformed from the unobservable to the observable
through patterns of practices, where practice is understood as verbal and physical action that is recurrent in a specific context, at an actor level.

### 1.4 The agency perspective

Not only is the individual’s conduct edged about and directed by his habitual relations to his fellows in the group, but these relations, being of an institutional character, vary as the institutional scene varies. (as cited in Scott, 2008, p. 3; Veblen, 1909, p. 245).

Even though the definition of institution, presented above, to a large part is founded on the previous discussion, it needs further unpacking. Institutions are defined and understood as taken-for-granted assumptions of how the social world functions and is constituted. Essential within OIE literature is the assumption that these taken-for-granted assumptions are formed by individuals’ habits of thought and action. In the following section I will extend the discussion from a structural perspective by adding an agency perspective. The agency perspective emanates in a cognitive dimension and moves towards a practical dimension of situated practices. The notion of deliberation has been subject to some academic discussion. In this text I will also present a view of how deliberation is interlinked with habits (and situated practice) that tentatively solves for the agency paradox (a thing that I will return to shortly).

#### 1.4.1 Instincts and habits

Our genes tell us something of our fundamental human nature, but they tell us nothing of the specific and varied cultural contexts in which vital human dispositions are channelled and formed. (Hodgson, 2004, p. 47).

OIE draws heavily on the classical institutionalism from Veblen together with Darwinism. Within OIE, there is traditionally a distinct separation between instincts in the one hand and habits on the other hand (Hodgson, 2004 chapters 3 and 8). These two human qualities to a large part can explain how taken-for-granted assumptions are formed. In short, instincts are those innate qualities that help us cope with the otherwise unknown world. Habits, on the other hand, are those qualities that help actors cope with the abundant amount of information that flourishes in the contextual surroundings.
A caveat seems in place. Social scientists often react with dismay as soon as biology or Darwinism is brought into a context of social sciences. My intent is not to engage in the ideologically loaded discussion about nature or nurture, but rather to present some of the underlying assumptions of how actors (with an inherent ability of agency) react to and from structural properties.

As used in this thesis, instincts refer to those inherited behavioural dispositions that cause unintentional reflexes. Such reflexes are most noticeable with new-borns, who have instinctive reflexes of hunger, gripping, and mimicry. It is these instincts that make babies cry out for attention, a communicative attempt of sort, so that adults in the vicinity can respond. Instincts can thus be understood as an inherent biological mechanism that helps individuals to cope with different types of stimuli. A note should here be made about the distinction between instinct, as inherent behavioural dispositions, and instinctual behaviour: that is the reaction to instincts. Veblen (as referenced in Hodgson, 2004, p. 165; 1914, pp. 2-3) argued that whereas instinctual behaviour can be changed, instincts cannot. In other words, we cannot control or affect that we feel hunger (instinct) but we can choose whether to eat or not (instinctual behaviour). In this way, actors are not deterministically predestined, but can control the behaviour as s/he coexists with other individuals.

Instincts, however, does not explain the process of socialisation in a satisfactory way. The process of socialisation refers to those instances where individual actors align their thoughts and practices to a norm within society. In order for us to rightly discuss and analyse socialisation another cognitive quality has to be added to instincts. This is where habits become valuable. As posited in this thesis, habits acquire a pivotal role in the constitution of

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9 As academic scholars we should always reject every form of reductionism, which, inherently, positions us as researcher within a closed field where it is impossible to escape. This closed field will, inevitably, hamper our ability to investigate and understand the complexity that society makes out to be.

10 Closely related – but not equated with – to Bourdieu’s term *habitus*. Bordieu defines habitus as a “system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experience, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions” (Bordieu, 1977 p. 95; as quoted in Scott, 2008 pp. 42-43).
institutions. Hodgson (2004, p. 167) describes the interlink, and more importantly the difference, of instincts and habits by stating that:

Instincts are ‘essentially simple’ and directed to ‘some concrete objective end’. Habits are the means by which the pursuit of these ends could be adapted in particular circumstances. In comparison to instinct, habit is a relatively flexible means of adapting to complexity, disturbance and unpredictable change.

Habits clearly demarcated from instincts as not being biologically inherited (Hodgson, 2004, p. 164), serves as a mechanism for coping with the abundance of recurrent and on-going process of information within social systems. Rather than being biologically inherited, habits are socially learned and serves as a social disposition that the actor has in social relationships with other individuals. Habits work in the background, mostly unconsciously, when the actor faces the external world. Burns and Scapens (2000, p. 6; with reference to Hodgson, 1993) rightly describes habits as “more or less self-actualizing dispositions or tendencies to engage in previously adopted or acquired forms of action”. The description put forth by Burns and Scapens highlights an essential part of habits as a constituent of institutions, namely that there exists a common understanding of how social relations should be organised and enacted.

As instincts partly shape our habits, so does habits shape habits of thought and habits of action. It is important to reject a conflation of these two concepts (habits on the one hand and habits of thought and action on the other hand) as the separation allows the individual actor a certain degree of autonomy. That is, actors have an ability to enact or dispose of different habits in different situations of thought or action. Giddens (1984) discusses this as well, and states that actors are knowledgeable individuals that can reflect and comment on all actions that s/he

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11 According to (Hodgson, 2003 p. 373) Veblen were influenced by the American pragmatic philosopher Dewey, when incorporating the notion of habits as a disposition, or propensity, into his theory of institutionalism.

12 We should be careful not to impart autonomy to those ‘common understanding’. This would construct institutions as something external of the actor, which would force us into rejecting the flat and local ontology that structuration theory builds on.
makes (he defines this as discursive consciousness, which I will come back to). Habits are therefore not only constituted as constraining but also as enabling for the individual actor\textsuperscript{13}. To quote Hodgson (2004, p. 170): “[h]abit is the grounding of both reflective and non-reflective behaviour. But this does not make belief, reason or will any less important or real”.

Habits are produced and reinforced in two manners. Firstly, habits are produced by instincts. As I have already discussed, instincts serve as our fundamental, biologically inherited, capability of handling different types of stimuli. Habits cannot be produced if we lack these basic response capabilities. Secondly, social imprints produce habits. Linking back to my previous discussion of structuration theory, habits are shaped and produced by the manner that other people are, and have been, acting in different situations.

Habits that are produced through a process of socialisation are generally done so in one out of two manners: (1) through an effect of incentives or constrains or (2) through imitation (cf. Hodgson, 2003, p. 374). Through the process of socialisation, defined as the alignment of habits of thought and action to a social norm, habits are continuously altered and (re-)aligned with these norms. Habits are, consequently, ontogenetic, meaning that they are shaped and produced as they are learned.

Summing up parts of this discussion, Hodgson (2003, p. 373) states that “[h]abits are submerged repertoires of potential behaviour; they can be triggered by an appropriate stimulus or context”. Defining habits as ‘repertoires’ ads another dimension to habits. They are not simply causes for thoughts or actions; they are actually actors’ accumulated (tacit) knowledge of

\textsuperscript{13}A note of caution! Even though I here present habits as non-determinant factor it should not be understood as a full rejection of institutions as constraints to the individual actor. As such, I do not go as long as postmodern philosophers, such as e.g. Foucault, and give the individual full autonomy against structural restraints, arguing that the individual always have a choice to make. Indeed, I agree with such scholars as e.g. Bourdieu, that structures might be, inherently, understood as mainly restraining and deterministic. The fact that this happens is connected to the manner in which taken-for-granted assumptions (which I will discuss further on) are embedded in habits of thought and action.
the social world. These ‘repertoires of potential behaviour’ defines actors’ cognitive dispositions in a manner that produces opportunities and capabilities for different types of (constraining or enabling) habits of thought and action. In a sense it can be argued that this accumulated (tacit) knowledge cannot be traced to or attached to any one individual actor. This does not mean that I perceive this repertoire to exist outside the individual actors. Rather, they are the accumulated (tacit) knowledge that are produced as individual actors adhere to a perception of how other people are likely to think or act.

1.4.2 The (re-)production of taken-for-granted assumptions

Habits of thought and action are the effects of an individual’s habits. That is, actors think and act in a manner that conforms to the dispositions (habits) that are prevalent. This means that habits of thought and action – to some degree – resonates against the backdrop of habits and constitutes a material manifestation of the cognitive dimension. From this perspective it might be argued that the paths that different individuals might take is inherently (instincts) and socially (habits) determined.

This is not equivalent to saying that individuals are prone to live out a deterministic life, where all thoughts and action inevitably are predestined by instincts and habits. In an attempt to move away from this fallacious assumption we must recognise the importance of how habits of thought and action fundamentally reconstitutes habits. This process partly interlinks with the previous discussion about the duality of structure. As habits themselves are the product of previous effects from structural properties (the process of socialisation through rules and resources), habits of thought and action also draw on these structural properties. That is, as actors continuously think and act habitually they do this by implicitly drawing on predominant structural properties constituted as individual cognitive dispositions. Taken-for-granted assumptions of how the social world is constituted affect those habits that the actor might have

\[\text{\textsuperscript{14} Such a claim would contradict my previous claim that habits are, partly, a product of continuous socialisation.}\]
had to begin with. Taken-for-granted assumptions, thus, becomes embedded as habits that essentially turn into “shared rules and typifications” (Barley & Tolbert, 1997, p. 96) and “settled ways of thinking” (Burns, 2000, p. 571).

Another closely related concept of habit is that of routine. Routines are commonly described as a practical trait, thus understood as being primarily located at a non-cognitive level. That is, routines are perceived as recursively conducted tasks within an organisational context. This is, however, misleading. Instead, routine should be understood as habits on a collective level15 (cf. Burns, 2000; Hodgson, 2003; Johansson & Siverbo, 2009). From this perspective the link between individual taken-for-granted assumptions does not only connect to the habits of one individual actor, but also to the routines on an organisational level.

1.4.3 Agency, intentionality, consequences, and deliberation

Giving habits such a prominent role in the constitution and (re-)production of taken-for-granted assumptions can give rise to criticism of not allowing for deliberation as a constitutive factor of behaviour (cf. Fleetwood, 2008). Deliberation, on the other hand, gives rise to a discussion about agency, intentionality and consequence.

Agency fundamentally refers to the capabilities that individual actors have of engaging (or not) in specific actions. Giddens (1984, p. 9) defines agency as “not the intentions people have in doing things but rather [...] their capability of doing those things in the first place”. From this perspective, the actor receives an opportunity of power in that s/he can act in one way or another. Power in Giddens perspective refers to the transformative capacity that transpires as

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Routines are not, however, habits. We should not draw that false conclusion. Rather routines should be understood as a cumulative effect of several individuals’ habits’. Hodgson (Hodgson, 2003 p. 375) e.g. writes that routines are “meta-habits, existing on a substrate of habituated individuals in a social structure”. He furthermore writes that “[h]abits and routines are replicators, at the individual and group levels respectively” (Hodgson, 2004 p. 418).
agency is enacted. Agency thus equates to the enactment of action, where the action of choosing not to act is included.

Other scholars have expanded the notion of agency to a more phenomenological concept in that it is “the interpretive processes whereby choices are imagined, evaluated, and contingently reconstructed by actors in on-going dialogue with unfolding situations” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 966). Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005, p. 15) touches upon this in his concept of sensemaking, where he states that it “is to talk about reality as an on-going accomplishment that takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves and their creations”. What these phenomenological forms of agency, however, refer to is what Giddens would define as intentional agency.

Intentionality, although interlinked with agency, have to be analytically separated from agency so that both intentional and unintentional agency can emerge. Giddens (1984, pp. 8-9) gives us two examples of the difference.

Firstly:

An officer on a submarine pulls a lever intending to change course, but instead, having pulled the wrong lever, sinks Bismarck. He has done something intentionally, albeit not what he imagined, but thus the Bismarck has been sunk through his agency.

And secondly:

Supposing an individual, A, were a malicious spirit and played a practical joke by placing the cup on a saucer at such an angle that, when picked up, it would be very likely to spill. Individual B picks up the coffee, and it duly spills over. It would be right to say that what A did brought the incident about. But A did not spill the coffee; B did. Individual B, who did not intend to spill the coffee, spilled the coffee; individual A, who did intend that the coffee should be spilled, did not spill it.

Intentionality and agency is thus separated. Agency refers to the power – as a transformative capacity – to engage in action, were action itself can be interpreted as including the act of not acting. Intentionality on the other hand, is the planning and imagination of agency.
Intentionality thus precedes agency in that phenomenological manner described above whereas unintentional agency lacks the imagined outcomes associated with intentional agency.

A second important part of agency refers to consequence. Consequence have been defined as "events that would not have happened if that actor had behaved differently, but which are not within the scope of the agent’s power to have brought about" (Giddens, 1984 p. 11). The implication of this definition is that there emerges a demarcation between unintentional action on the one hand and unintentional consequence on the other hand. Unintentional action is connected to the transformative capacity (the actors’ agency power) and the latter, unintentional consequence, is not. In the first example above, the pulling of the wrong lever sinks the Bismarck. Pulling the lever is intentionally done but sinking the Bismarck is an unintentional consequence of the actors’ agency. Giddens (1984, p. 11) argues that as consequences are further removed in time and space from the context of the action, the more likely it is that intentionality of agency becomes reduced.

Agency, intentionality and consequence are inherently important for further understanding interlinks of action and taken-for-granted assumptions of the social reality. But it is also important for understanding how deliberation takes place within the framework. As I will argue in the following section, it is important to make an analytical distinction between deliberation and taken-for-granted assumptions, but just as important not to position either one in priority over the other.

1.4.4 Structure and agency as embedded phenomenon

An effect of the process of socialisation is that taken-for-granted assumptions contain embedded structures. That is, structural properties (rules and resources) become reflected in those ‘settled ways of thinking’ (habits) that functions as the boundaries for actors. This process, where structural properties and taken-for-granted assumptions (institutions) impose and affect on individuals’ habits, have been defined as a reconstitutive downward causation (Hodgson, 2004, pp. 184-188). Reconstitutive downward causation connects to the previously
discussed reification process, where the actor is alienated from the construction s/he makes. As the taken-for-granted assumptions assume objective properties, they start to constrain the viability of actions that the actor can take and still maintain within the comfort zone of ‘doing the right things’. In this manner, Hodgson (2004, p. 168) concludes, “institutional norms and conventions are pressed upon the individual”.

To avoid the fallacy of methodological collectivism we must keep in mind how habits continuously affect habits of thought and action. Following the implications staked out in structuration theory I argue that the on-going reproduction of structural properties (rules and resources) continuously reinforces or changes the manner in which structural properties are constituted. From this perspective, the process of cause-effect becomes blurred into an unremitting on-going phenomenon. The implication of this is that not only do taken-for-granted assumptions contain embedded structures, but they also contain embedded agency. Embedded agency refers to the capability of actors to inflict change on structural properties and institutions. It also refers to the changes that inflicts back upon the actor. That is, as habits and structural properties, continuously change habits of thought and action, leading to the formation of taken-for-granted assumptions (institutions), they recursively change habits and structural properties. This reasoning aligns with the reasoning surrounding duality of structure within structuration theory.

The notion of embedded agency opens up for a potentially paradoxical situation. Firstly, as structural properties shape our taken-for-granted assumptions of the social world it fundamentally creates boundaries for how we engage in every-day life. The very essence of taken-for-granted assumptions is to create stability in an un-orderly (social) world so that each individual actor can predict behavioural patterns within the social system. Secondly, actors are invoked with a power of agency, allowing them, us, to act, not only intending to acting, but actually acting. Agency furthermore allows for the reproduction of structural properties fundamentally leading to the disruption of stability. As Barley and Tolbert (1997, p. 94) states it
"[i]nstitutions [...] represent constraints on the options that individuals and collectives are likely to exercise, albeit constraints that are open to modification over time".

1.4.5 Taken-for-granted assumptions and deliberations

So far I have argued that habits of thought and action together with structural properties shape the manner in which taken-for-granted assumptions are manifested. These taken-for-granted assumptions gain more strength as habits of thought and action, shaped by individuals' habits, goes through a process of reification. When this happens the subjectivity of the human product becomes transformed into a perception of an objective non-human product. But this definition, as posited so far, does not allow for direct deliberation in everyday life. That is, how can actors think or act in a manner that contradicts the reified taken-for-granted assumptions (cf. Holm, 1995, p. 398; Seo & Creed, 2002, p. 230)? An important piece of this intricate puzzle is the already mentioned concepts of intentionality and consequence.

Deliberation is the ability to reflect on the possibilities ahead and to make more or less informed decisions in accordance with those reflections. As such, deliberation should be understood as the ability to make a priori consideration and reasoning before employing agency. Construed and understood in this manner, deliberation receives a character of being highly intentional. Drawing on what Giddens concluded about intentionality and consequences, I assume that deliberation occurs when consequences are near in time and space of the context of action. That is, when an actor is in a position where the consequence of an act is acknowledged, it is likely that deliberation will govern the act itself.

Taken-for-granted assumptions, on the other hand, are shaped through a process of reification of habits of thought and action. Remembering that Giddens defined institutions as those structural properties that had the longest time-space effect, I furthermore make an assumption that these instances have unclear direct consequences. Subscribing to the notion that intentionality decreases as consequences are further removed from the context of action, it is logical to also assume that taken-for-granted assumptions have low intentionality. That is, as
actors are in positions where the consequence of an act is so removed from the act itself that it is not consciously acknowledged; it is likely that taken-for-granted assumptions will govern the act. Indeed, as Jepperson (1991, p. 147) rightly puts it: “taken-for-grantedness is distinct from conscious awareness”.

Writing on the topic of deliberation within institutionalism, Fleetwood (2008, p. 193) states that deliberation may be connected to the individuals’ consciousness. He argues that habits can start out as consciously encountered (deliberation) and then gradually slip into unconscious encountering (taken-for-granted assumption). Intentions driven by habits can be interrupted, causing deliberations to solve for potential conflicts. These new habits start out as non-habitual but may be transformed into habits. Acknowledging this argument and equating consciousness with intentionality, I argue that deliberation and habits continuously produce and reproduced each other. Depending on how far removed consequences are from the context of action, primacy in one or the other is changeable. Hodgson (2004, p. 172) draws the conclusion that deliberation functions as a valve for those instances where “habits conflict, or are insufficient to deal with the complex situation”.

The abstract concepts of taken-for-granted assumptions vs. deliberation might here become somewhat clearer with the use of an example. Imagine that you are about to cross a semi-heavily trafficked street in your hometown. Which way do you look? If you live in a nation that drives on the right side of the road, you are likely to begin looking to the left. You do this without thinking since you have underwent a process of socialisation (through both limitation and imitation) where looking firstly to the left have become a taken-for-granted behaviour. This becomes especially salient if you travel to a nation where they drive on the left side of the road. You might then come to realise that you still look to the left, even though you know that traffic is likely to come the other way. You become aware of your taken-for-granted assumptions on how to behave when crossing the street and the need for deliberation (intentionally looking right instead of left) is surfaced.
Instead of having a rather fruitless discussion about the priority of either one, I argue that the two sets presented above are continuously coexisting. Reflexive deliberations take on a form of high intentionality as consequences in the context of action is near in time and space. This means that deliberation occurs consciously in instances where the "normal" flow of taken-for-granted assumptions are interrupted or were they do not have any given guidance. Taken-for-granted assumptions take on a form of low intentionality as consequences are far removed from the context of actions. Taken-for-granted assumptions are enacted unconsciously as actors pursue their every-day life, enacting day-to-day activities. As consequences changes position, fundamentally moving further away or towards the context of action, the manner of taken-for-granted assumptions are refurbished. What used to be enacted unconsciously can, thus, become an instance for deliberation if the consequence of the action is highlighted in a manner that the taken-for-granted assumptions cannot handle. Similarly, deliberations can become taken-for-granted assumptions when consequences are further removed from actions. The above dynamics touches upon some previous scholarly work on institutional contradictions (cf. Burns & Baldvindsdottir, 2005; Bush, 1987, p. 1080; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 973; Seo & Creed, 2002) or analogies (Foss & Lorenzon, 2009) as drivers for institutional change. In other words, if the current institutional order cannot handle the new situation, the actor is temporarily emancipated from the institutional embeddedness as the consequence is positioned closer to the context of action.

1.4.6 Practice, action, and path-dependency

A final important aspect of the agency perspective within institutionalism as I enact it in this thesis, is the notion of situated practices and path-dependency. In order to understand how these two concepts are interlinked in the framework of institutionalism that I use, there is a need to discuss action.

Scott (2008, p. 49) argues that we must "attend to the activities that produce and reproduce [institutions] and to the resources that sustain them". That is, it is only through observable
practice that we can understand how taken-for-granted assumptions affect actors over time and space. It would, however, be fallacious to equate practice with institutions. Throughout this chapter I have discussed how taken-for-granted assumptions leads to a continuous production and reproduction of habits and furthermore of habits of thought and action.

As this distinction is made, a separation is maintained between the material and cognitive dimensions of actors. Practice – and here I refer to habits of action, but the argument can easily be transmitted onto habits of thought – are located in the material dimension of actors, whilst institutions (taken-for-granted assumptions) are located within a cognitive dimension. By maintaining this separation, we can analytically understand materiality as a reaction of cognition, implicating that the two are not one (but inherently interdependent). Practice, thus, is not an institution, but rather a connection between the material and cognitive dimensions.

For analytical reasons (which I will return to when discussing the analytical model) it is important to make a clear distinction between practice, as discussed above, and action. Practice is here understood as the unconscious enactment of structural and cultural beliefs (cf. Seo & Creed, 2002, p. 230): that is, conformity with taken-for-granted assumptions. Action, on the other hand, is the conscious attempt to deviate from those taken-for-granted assumptions. Jepperson (1991, p. 149) puts this accurately when stating “one enacts institutions; one takes action by departing from them, not by participating in them”. Practice should however not be understood as mundane tasks without deeper meaning. Contrary, practice should be understood as “a set of meaningful activities that are informed by wider cultural beliefs” (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012, p. 128). This means that even though practice can be characterised with a low degree of intentionality, these activities still carry sound meaning to the actor.

Finally, practice is, situated, path-dependant, and continuous. This implies that those meaningful activities that actors engage in, whilst enacting taken-for-granted assumptions, to a large extent is governed by historical and social contexts. Indeed, Powell (1991, p. 191) argues
that path-dependency is one of the key factors for institutional reproduction. Powell’s argument is that historical decisions govern the possibility of future decisions, implicating a historical boundary on actors. Path-dependency resonates well against the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of OIE as well. Remembering that Veblen’s institutionalism draws on Darwinism, it can be understood that change of taken-for-granted assumptions happens evolutionary rather than revolutionary (Hodgson, 2004, pp. 95-98). That is, history constrain and enable change of taken-for-granted assumptions (cf. Powell, 1991, p. 192).

### 1.5 A multiplicity of institutions

A fundamental assumption in this thesis is that society consists of not one dominating institution, but rather a multiplicity of institutions, constantly affecting actors within that specific social system. Furthermore, I assume that those institutions are continuously produced and reproduced as actors draw on structural properties in order to make sense of the context wherein the exist. Indeed, Giddens (1984, p. 164) claims very much the same in his formulation of structuration theory by stating that “all societies both are social systems and at the same time are constituted by the intersection of multiple social systems”.

Structuration theory does admit the possibility, and indeed the probability, for multiple social systems to coexist and affect actors. The theoretical formulation for such occurrence within structuration theory is the existence of intersocietal systems (Giddens, 1984, p. 244). But structuration theory, being a theory of action rather than institutionalism, makes sweeping arguments about how these intersocietal systems affect actors in their activities. An emerging literature within institutionalism approaches this topic more straightforward: the institutional logics perspective.

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16 Indeed, the nature of path-dependency from an evolutionary perspective is the very foundation for rejecting NIE with its rational choice perspective and view of institutional environments as tabula rasa (cf. Agevall, 2005, pp. 81-82).
Institutional logics was first introduced by Friedland and Alford (1991)\(^ {17} \) in the “orange book” of NIS (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991)\(^ {18} \). What the institutional logics perspective utilises, which NIS fails to do, is the consideration of “the duality of the material and symbolic aspects of institutions” (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 18). That is, an institutional logics perspective facilitates both cognitions of institutions (symbolic) and the transformation of these into actions and behaviours (practice).

Thornton and Ocasio (1999, p. 804; see also Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 101; Thornton et al., 2012, p. 51) defines institutional logics as:

 [...] the socially constructed, historical pattern of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality.

As such, the institutional logics perspective allows for a more holistic approach, not bounded by structuralism (e.g. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) or a partition of the cognitive and normative (e.g. Scott, 2008 and the idea of structural pillars of institution). Rather, it is an inclusive and holistic approach for understanding institutions, agency and the partial autonomy that these have.

1.5.1 Society as an interinstitutional system

One of the key features of the institutional logics perspectives is the introduction of society as an interinstitutional system. The fundamental idea, as proposed by Friedland and Alford (1991) is that societies are governed by different sets of preferences and behaviours that can be

\(^{17}\) Even though Friedland and Alford first presented the notion of institutional logics in the 1991 chapter, some of the basic ideas shaping the idea about multiple institutions in a society were presented earlier. Alford and Friedland (1985) presented their idea about multiple institutions, although in the periphery, when arguing for an analysis of power in social systems.

\(^{18}\) Quite ironically, the underlying attempt and purpose of the “orange book”, was to bring back more structuralism to NIS. But with the contribution of Friedland and Alford (1991), an entirely new concept, institutional logics, was introduced that fundamentally challenged much of those inherent assumptions that NIS carried.
connected to different overarching institutional orders. Institutional orders can be understood as “a governance system that provides a frame of reference that preconditions actors’ sensemaking choices” (Thornton et al., 2012 p. 54). Each institutional order is fundamentally understood through a number of characteristics, of both symbolic and material practices that shape the specifics of that order. Through these characteristics of institutional orders, actors shape preferences and behaviour, fundamentally reinforcing the institutional order in the first place (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 242).

The logics of institutional logics comes in as actors adhere or oppose to dominating institutional orders by producing and reproducing categories of different institutional orders in different situations of everyday life. As such, we can understand the logics as the rationality with which actors (unconsciously for the most part) constitute their individual set of rules and resources that create constraints or enablers in everyday life (cf. Lounsbury, 2007, p. 289).

1.6 Analytical model

So far, this chapter has mainly presented a framework consisting of a merger between structuration theory and institutionalism (primarily OIE). This has been done in order to present a framework of logical (original) institutionalism (presented as the secondary aim of this chapter). This is necessary in order to create a holistically viable theory that helps us understand the process of making meaning of conflicts from an actor perspective.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how actors (re-)produce taken-for-granted assumptions in order to make meaning of embedded institutional logic conflicts in organisational control mechanisms. Such conflicting institutional logics emanate from a political (ideological) level and are continuously transformed from policy making to organisational control mechanisms. That is, the theoretical discrepancy between economic efficiency on the one hand and rule-of-law on the other.
The analytical model that I use in this thesis is based on three fundamental assumptions. These assumptions, in turn, are built and reinforced by the previous discussion of original (logical) institutionalism. Firstly, it is assumed that actors have a basic need to make meaning of the situations that they exist within. Taken-for-granted assumptions serve as a fundamental mechanism for making such meaning. Secondly, it is assumed that taken-for-granted assumptions are firmly grounded in the social system that the actor exits in. Following structuration theory, this implies that taken-for-granted assumptions can be analytically separated and interpreted using the notion of structural properties. Thirdly, it is assumed that meaning can be made in two ways. This occurs either through connecting an already existing meaning to a social situation or by creating new meanings to an emerging social situation.

1.6.1 Taken-for-granted assumptions as frameworks of meaning

Institutions, understood as taken-for-granted assumptions, are fundamentally mechanisms that actors enact in order to make meaning to the social context that they currently perceive. That is, by drawing on different institutions in different contexts, an ontological security is established which lets the actor behave or act in a certain manner without feeling discomfort. The absence of institutions means that the actor is left without any prerequisites for coping with an emerging situation. Translated into a public administrative context, the notion of institutions helps operational managers to cope with and understand different contexts that emerge in their everyday life as managers.

From the perspective presented throughout this thesis, it becomes essential to understand the concepts of rule-of-law and economic efficiency as different taken-for-granted assumptions that coexist in our current social system. That is, the concepts of rule-of-law and economic efficiency, as presented and understood in chapter one, are frameworks that have a number of embedded and associated taken-for-granted assumptions. Rule-of-law and economic efficiency are furthermore connected to different institutional logics. That is, the logics of the traditional
Rechtsstaat connects to the concept of rule-of-law while the logics surrounding New Public Management connects to the concept of economic efficiency.

1.6.2 Structural properties of meaning

As presented above in this chapter, social systems are connected in time and space through a number of structural properties. That is, social patterns and taken-for-granted assumptions can emerge, and indeed re-emerge, within social systems, connecting time and space through the enactment of rules and resources. Structural properties form the backdrop for which existing taken-for-granted assumptions receive meaning. Or rather, it is through actors’ enactment of structural properties that social acts are connected. In defining structuration theory, Giddens (1984) argue that structural properties comes from structures within a social system. From an analytical perspective, these are separated into three interdependent structures: structures of (1) significance, (2) legitimation, and (3) domination.

Structures of signification contain symbolic orders and discourses of a social system. The manner in which actors describe or talk about specific phenomenon or situations, can create interlinks with taken-for-granted assumptions of that actor. Structures of legitimation contain (perceived) social norms or standards and judicial laws of a social system. Structures of legitimation fundamentally sanction the constitution of taken-for-granted assumptions within the social system. Rules emanating from either (or both) structures of significance and legitimation are in place to govern the tacit knowledge that actors need to coexist within the social system. Structures of domination, on the other hand consists of both allocative and authoritative modes of resources with transformative power. That is, resources (irrespective of kind) are modes to change or affect acts within the social system (or the social system itself). Allocative resources refer to transformative capacities over material objects, whereas authoritative resources refer to transformative capacities over other actors. That is, resources within structuration theory are not the material resources as such, but rather the capacity to change and command them.
1.6.3 Connecting and creating meaning

I argue that meaning, through taken-for-granted assumptions, in a social context can be made in two ways: they can be either (1) connected or (2) created. The differentiation between these two modes is important when analysing how actors (re-)produce taken-for-granted assumptions.

Social theory makes a distinction between behaviour and action. The prior is usually understood as the conformity with currently existing taken-for-granted assumptions (discussed as practice in sections above). The latter, on the other hand, is the conscious attempt to deviate from it. This connects well with the previous discussion about intentionality and deliberation as means for breaking with already established taken-for-granted assumptions. The argument as presented above is that a separation between taken-for-granted assumptions and deliberation has to be made in order to give room for both agency and intentionality in everyday life.

Expanding on this prior discussion, I argue that actors continuously either adhere to or reject taken-for-granted assumptions that are in place.

In situations where there exists a taken-for-granted assumption that carries a meaning for an emerging situation, an actor may feel comfortable with connecting this meaning to the situation. Connecting meaning to situations implies that the actor to some extent acknowledges that the taken-for-granted assumptions are viable for that given situation. That is, unconsciously the actor feels comfortable with adhering to the taken-for-granted assumption.

The process of connecting meaning implies a reproductive state where taken-for-granted assumptions are unconsciously enacted in actors’ everyday life. In such situations it is assumed that the consequence of an act is far removed from the act itself. The reproductive state of connecting meaning is furthermore characterised through actors acting through habitual behaviour. That is, the individual actor lacks in conscious reflection on how or why meaning is applied to the situation. There is no need for conscious deliberation on the application of
meaning (or the meaning of the meaning itself) since the situation is resolved and made sense of through existing taken-for-granted assumptions.

As an alternative to actors' ability to connect meaning to different situations I propose the process of creating meaning. It is assumed that instances where creation of meaning is occurring is predominantly characterised by conflicting situations. Such conflicts may pivot the foundations that established taken-for-granted assumptions are meant to stabilise. In such emerging conflicts it may be the case that existing taken-for-granted situations carries no viable meaning. The actor is thus thrust into a situation where ontological insecurity and a sense of discomfort may occur. The process of creating meaning, however, thwarts such a process by enacting a productive state of creating new meaning to the emerging conflicts. That is, the actor is made aware of the consequences of acting, implying that the time and space distance is reduced from the act itself. As this happens, the actor consciously deliberate on the situation, fundamentally using what is available to create a viable meaning in explanation of the situation. Creation of meaning is an act of deliberation. As such it is highly intentional and actors act through conscious actions.
1.7 References


