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Situating frames and institutional logics:
The social situation as a key institutional micro-foundation

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Research on institutional logics has highlighted the importance of social situations but has not theorized such situations in a way that takes into account their inherent richness, complexity and unpredictability. Without a theory of social situations, the connection between logics and people's everyday life experience is incomplete, resulting in fragile micro-foundations. Building on Goffman (1974) and the institutional logics perspective, in this essay I sketch an institutional theory of social situations, distinguishing two components of these situations: situational experience and situated interactions. Situational experience is constituted by situational frames –i.e. schemas by which a person can perceive others and interpret the source of their agency in a situation. Multiple situational frames are simultaneously present in any situation, offering various potentials for action. Institutional logics shape the content that situational frames take in different institutional orders, providing rules for interacting appropriately in typified situations. However, the actual interactions unfolding in a given social situation do not necessarily conform to situational frames, but rather can transform those frames in unpredictable ways through interaction rituals and frame keyings. I contrast this situated perspective with the cognitivist notion that people 'activate' or re-combine pre-existing aspects of logics depending on the situation. I argue that a situated perspective better accounts for the generative and transformative potential of micro-interactions.

Keywords: institutional logics; frames; inhabited institutions; practice-driven institutionalism; symbolic interactionism; Goffman; situation.

Introduction

Since its origin, the construct of institutional logic was developed with an explicit micro-foundational agenda: to locate human behaviour in societal context by highlighting its mutually constitutive relationship with institutions and their underlying logics (Friedland and Alford, 1991: 242). In fact, the very definition of institutional logics as 'the material practices and symbolic categories by which humans conduct their material life and give meaning to it' (cf. Thornton and Ocasio, 1999: 804) puts at centre stage people's everyday life experience. Yet, perhaps due to the rapid upsurge of research on institutional logics (see Ocasio, Thornton and Lounsbury, 2017 for review), scholars' portrayals of logics have become somehow detached from people's everyday life experience, sometimes conjuring the image of 'free floating' cultural templates that are disembodied and disconnected from people's everyday life (Lok, Creed, De Jordy & Voronov, 2017).

My over-arching argument in this essay is two-fold. First, I submit that a robust theory of how logics connect with human behaviour needs to strengthen the conceptual link between logics and people's everyday life experience. Second, I argue that one way to forge such a link is to develop a notion of social situations that takes simultaneously into account people's complex experience of 'being in a social situation' and institutional logics' influence over social situations. By 'social situation' I mean a temporally and physically bounded, here-and-how, episode of social interaction (Goffman 1967; Collins, 2004). A social situation is therefore 'the bounded social entity most immediate to the individual's experience, within which his/her mundane affairs with others occur' (Gonos, 1977: 854). My arguments are in line with an inhabited institutions approach (e.g. Hallett & Ventresca, 2006), practice-driven institutionalism (e,g. Smets, Aristidou, & Whittington, 2017; Furnari, 2014; Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007) and recent works linking logics with people's emotions and lived experiences (Voronov & Weber, 2016; Lok et al., 2017; Zietsma & Toubiana, 2018).

The social situation has been already acknowledged as an important factor in Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury (2012)'s seminal model of the micro-foundations of institutional logics (thereafter TOL model). In this model, individuals are envisioned as 'activating' selected aspects of the institutional logics into which they have been socialized, depending on the characteristics of the situation. Specifically, the activation of logics depends on the *'situational fit'* between the applicability of the cultural knowledge embodied in the logics and the salient aspects of the situation (Thornton et al., 2012: 16). While this model unpacked key mechanisms connecting logics and individual behaviour, it also relied on a simplified notion of social situations. In particular, the model did not directly examine people's definition of the situation, an element identified by micro-interactionist scholars as key to understand what's going on in social situations (Goffman, 1974).

Participating a social situation requires some form of shared situational experience among participants, allowing them to understand what a situation is about, in general terms, and what *that* specific situation they are encountering is about (Diehl and McFarland, 2010). The TOL model does not explicitly focus on situational experience, devoting limited attention to the sources of such experience and the processes by which people reach a definition of the situation. In fact, the cognitivist language of 'situational fit' points to a rather objectified notion of situations as containers to which logics can be applied 'from the outside'. This notion reduces the inherent richness, complexity and unpredictability of social situations, black-boxing their inner workings and obscuring their link with logics. As a result, the role of situated micro-interactions in the TOL model is relatively limited: interactions can either 'activate' (or not) different pre-existing aspects of institutional logics. This 'activation' language stands in contrast with people's everyday experience of social interactions as highly contingent and unpredictable streams of events, often ripe with what Goffman (1974) called the 'bizarre potentials of social life' (p. 15).

To overcome these limitations, I develop a notion of social situations that gives justice to their inherent richness, complexity, and unpredictability while simultaneously taking into account how institutional logics are a key source of order and meaning in social situations. My point of departure is that people are socialized into institutional logics *through* social situations. As people experience and interact in different kinds of situations in the course of their life, they start recognizing how situations differ (or are similar) in terms of their institutional specificity. They learn that different 'typified situations' set apart an institutional order from another (cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Weber & Voronov, 2016; Weber &Glynn, 2006). For example, they learn in what ways a 'family lunch' situation differs from, and is similar to, a 'professional lunch' situation. Importantly, these typified situations are learned not as near-decomposable *modular* systems of knowledge, as the cognitivist TOL model assumes (p. 59-60), but as *holistic* gestalts of layered situational frames (Diehl and McFarland, 2010).

If frames define the schemata of interpretation that people use to locate events in the world (Goffman, 1974: 21), *situational* frames more specifically refer to the schemas that people use to interpret others' behaviour in a social situation by locating the sources of their agency. Building on Goffman (1974), I focus on two such situational frames: 1) *role frame*, through which a person reads others' behaviour in terms of role demands; 2) *character frame,* through which a person reads others' behaviour in terms of expressing emotions and stylized aspects of their selves. These frames are always layered on top of each other in any situation of interaction and are thus always simultaneously co-present and available for interpretation, if only latently, in any situation. They are latent potentials for situated interaction.

The typified situations that people learn through their socialization into different institutional orders are thus gestalts of role and character frames –i.e. recipes for interacting in, and reading through, institutionally-specific situations. By providing the cultural content

that these recipes or situational gestalts can take, institutional logics guide and condition situated interaction. Although conditioning, logics do not determine the social interactions unfolding in a specific situation at a given time and place. Through their situated interactions people can reproduce the typified patterns of interaction inscribed into situational frames, but they can also *transform* such frames through the process of interaction itself. For example, some of the roles and characters perceived to be displayed in interaction may induce shared emotional energy and mutual attention among interactants (Collins, 2004), which can in turn *generate* a new definition and understanding of the situation that was not available to the interactants through the typified situations in which they had been socialized (Furnari, 2014).

I leverage Collins (2004)'s ideas about interaction ritual chains and Goffman (1974)'s ideas about keyings to provide some illustrations of this transformative potential of situated micro-interactions. From this vantage point, situated behaviour does not depend on which aspects of logics 'fit the situation', but on which role and character frames, out of the ones available in an institutionally-constituted situation, become eventually sustained through the process of interaction itself. It is the inherent relational nature of *inter*-action –as something that happens *in-between* two or more people- that makes the interaction process ripe with transformative potential and surprises.

This essay is structured in five sections. First, I summarize the tenets of the TOL model and its scope limitations to understand social situations. I use this model as a point of comparison to illustrate my different notion of social situations. I chose this model because it includes social situations as a key part of logics' micro-foundations and it is the most systematic theorization of such micro-foundations to date. Second, I identify two components of a social situation (situational experience and situated interactions) and conceptualize situational experience as a gestalt of two layered situational frames. Third, I argue that people's socialization into different institutional orders and its logics is a key source of these

situational frames. Fourth, I discuss how the interactions taking place in a given social situation can transform situational frames via interaction rituals and frame keyings. Fifth, I discuss the implications of my arguments for research on the micro-foundations of institutional logics.

Micro-foundations of institutional logics: are social situations missing in action?

Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury (2012) developed the first, fully-fledged model of individual behaviour that accounts for both the constraining and enabling role of institutional logics on human attention, cognition and action. Their model assumes that individual behaviour is intentional –i.e. guided by an individual's identities and goals (March and Olsen, 1989)- and rationally bounded –i.e. constrained by cognitive schemas (Simon, 1955). Another key assumption is that an individual's identities, goals and schemas are embedded in institutional logics: an individual can understand and construct her own identities, goals and schemas only *from within* the multiple logics in which she has been socialized (Friedland and Alford, 1991). Thus, any given individual is assumed to have *multiple* institutionally-shaped identities, goals and schemas, because throughout their lives any human is socialized –to different degrees- into multiple institutional orders and their associated logics.

Based on these assumptions, Thornton et al. (2012) developed the '*availability-accessibility-activation*' model, arguing that an individual's behaviour in a given situation can be explained as a function of: 1) the multiple institutional logics that are *available* in the individual's mind through her previous socialization; 2) the subset of the available logics that are *accessible* (i.e. come to mind) to the individual in the specific situation; 3) the logics, among the accessible ones, that are *activated* (i.e. concretely used in action) by the individual in the specific situation. The activated institutional logic(s) will then prompt one or more of the multiple available identities, goals and schemas associated with the available logics, thus

influencing individual behaviour in a given situation. Importantly, both the accessibility and activation of logics are shaped not only by logics' availability, but also by 'the characteristics of the situation', where social situations are defined as "the immediate social context and interactions as well as [its] materials properties" (Thornton et al., 2012: 80). Social situations play a key role in shaping the activation of logics in a given situation: 'which aspects of institutional logics are activated is contingent on the applicability of accessible knowledge structures [i.e. institutional logics] to salient aspects of the situation" (Thornton et al., 2012: 16 [added]). Thus, the 'situational fit' between accessible institutional logics and the characteristics of the situation is a fundamental explanatory factor in the TOL model.

But how is this 'situational fit' achieved? How do people come to understand and evaluate the 'applicability of accessible logics to the characteristics of the situations' that they experience in their lives? These questions are key to understand how logics influence individual behaviour. Three insights are provided to address these questions. First, the TOL model distinguishes between non-routine and routine situations (Ocasio, 2011) based on the salience of "unusual or expected actions and outcomes" compared to past situations (Thornton et al., 2012: 92). Under novel situations, less accessible (but still available) logics are predicted to be activated or re-combined. Second, some of the identities associated with certain logics are more likely to be accessible and activated across situations depending on the extent to which an individual's social relations rest on those identities (McCall and Simmons, 1978). Third, identities can be verified through the social interactions and symbolic exchanges occurring in social situations (Stryker and Burke, 2000). While the TOL model has greatly contributed to the development of the micro-foundations of institutional logics, as shown by empirical and theoretical applications of this model (Pache and Santos, 2013; McPherson and Sauder, 2013), this model is also limited in three key respects.

First, the model does not problematize people's understanding and definition of the situation. As micro-interactionist research has long highlighted, the notion of 'situation' itself is problematic and shifty. Social situations are circumstances in which "*the view that one person has of what is going on is likely to be quite different from that of another. There is a sense in which what is play for the golfer is work for the caddy*" (Goffman, 1974: 8; emphasis added). Although we often think of situations as "something happening before the eyes of observers…..the crucial question of how a seeming agreement was reached concerning the identity of the "something" and the inclusiveness of "before the eyes" still remains" (Goffman, 1974: 9). In other words, the construct of situation presupposes some form of 'situational experience' shared among interactants about what a situation is about (Diehl and McFarland, 2010). TOL (2012)'s model, however, does not directly focus on the question of how such situational experience can be achieved and whether the participants of a situation are assumed to 'see' the same situation in the same way or not.

Second, it is not clear whether people's understandings of the situation are assumed to be endogenous to the institutional orders and logics in which people are embedded or not. The cognitivist language of 'situational fit' seems to indicate that social situations are external to logics by depicting them as a 'containers' to which logics need to be 'fitted in'. As a result, it is not clear how exactly logics shape the experience of the situation of interactants, an element that Goffman (1974) identified as key to understand situations and their micro-interaction dynamics. Similarly, less attention is devoted to explain how such situational experience shape the availability, accessibility and activation of institutional logics *in situ.*

Third, the idea that social interactions and situations are triggers 'activating' institutional logics seem to reduce the inherent richness, complexity, ambiguity and unpredictability of social situations and the interactions happening in them. Social interactions do not just activate or re-combine existing cultural materials that pre-date them,

they can also more radically *transform* those materials (Gray, Ansari and Purdy, 2015). This more generative, and potentially transformative role of situations remains under-theorized in the TOL model. Differently, situations are mostly described as quite passive contexts that can 'fit' (or not) with people's cultural knowledge (logics), or as settings in which people can verify (or not) pre-existing social identities. Such imagery tends to depict social interactions as the sums or linear combinations of pre-existing elements rather than as fluid, non-linear streams of events in which something distinctively novel can, perhaps unpredictably, emerge (Strauss, 1993).

In sum, although the TOL model acknowledges the role of social situations, it does not give full justice to what we know about social situations from micro-interactionist research –i.e. that they are richly textured, complex interaction settings often ripe with surprises. We need a more multi-dimensional conceptualization of social situations to take simultaneously into account people's complex experience of being in a social situation and institutional logics' influence over social situations.

Two components of social situations: situational experience and situated interactions

What goes on in a situation of social interaction? An answer to this question is essential to a robust conceptualization of social situations. Building on Goffman (1974) and Diehl and McFarland (2010)'s extension of his work, I argue that at least two distinct people's activities 'go on' in a social situation: 1) people encountering the situation recognize, largely unconsciously and implicitly, the *type of situation* that they are encountering and such recognition induces a shared orientation among them; 2) people *actually* interact in the situation and such interactions may, more or less faithfully, replicate their pre-situational understanding of roles and relationships (i.e. their recognition of the type of the situation) or deviate from such understanding, leading to an implicit re-negotiation of

the definition of the situation or to an explicit contest/conflict over it. These two activities can be thought as two components of a social situation or as "two distinct moments in situational interaction" (Diehl and McFarland, 2010: 1718). These moments are *analytically* distinct, for the benefit of conceptualization and analysis, but empirically they are overlapping and ongoing[1].

Importantly, the first moment of situational interaction implies the presence of some form of inter-subjective understanding among the interactants about the definition of the situation -i.e. "what is this situation about?". This inter-subjective understanding is what can be described as 'situational experience' and is inextricably connected with situated interactions: any situated interaction becomes understandable and meaningful only in relation to the shared background constituted by people's inter-subjective understanding of what the situation is about. Thus, to understand how logics influence situated behavior, we first need to understand what this situational experience is, and how it can be conceptualized in a way that allows us to see the link between logics and social situations in more clear focus.

Situational experience as gestalt of layered frames

To capture situational experience, Goffman used the concept of 'frame', which he defined as the principles governing the subjective meanings we assign to events (Goffman, 1974: 11). The concept of frame allows to address a key puzzle: if social situations are all seemingly different from one another, what explains people's remarkable ability and ease in understanding what a specific situation is about? At its core, this question concerns how order and meaning emerges out of "the bizarre potentials of social life" (p. 15), the overwhelming

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[1] The distinction of these two 'moments' is reflected in micro-interactionist research at large. Indeed, this research implicitly or explicitly focuses on either the first moment, unpacking the formation of situational experience (e.g. Scheff, 1990)- or the second moment, investigating how actual interaction dynamics can change or validate situational experience (Collins, 2004; Summers-Eifler, 2002).

and often unpredictable flow of people's everyday life experience. Goffman's answer is that people's apparent 'naturalness' in understanding situations actually derives from frames. Frames provide an organization to people's experience of situations, making that experience meaningful and comparable across seemingly different situations.

A core insight of Goffman's theory is that any social situation can always be interpreted from multiple, connected frames simultaneously. Thus, *multiple frames always co-exist in the same situation.* It is this incessant co-existence of multiple, connected frames in any given situation that explains another key puzzle –i.e. the fact that people are able to see and interpret the same situation from many different perspectives but at the same time they usually experience that situation as a "seamless whole" or "gestalt" (Diehl and McFarland, 2010: 1716). Consider a faculty meeting. One can interpret it as an empty institutionalized ceremony, a show-off of power by the head of faculty, an opportunity to gain visibility with colleagues, a technical meeting to fix practical problems, a social gathering. When a person participates a faculty meeting in a specific time and place, these different perspectives (or frames) are all simultaneously co-present and more or less latent, they are all there offering different potential lines for action and interaction in the situation. Yet, despite the multiplicity of these co-existing and inextricably interwoven layers of interpretation, we typically experience different types of situations as having their own distinctive "ethos" or "feeling" (Goffman, 1963: 19). This situational 'character' is experienced holistically by the person as a "gestalt" that can be often described with a synthetic shorthand adjective or noun.

Although Goffman (1974: 269-286) and later extensions of his work (Diehl and McFarland, 2010) identify a variety of basic situational frames that together constitute situational experience, for reasons of space limitations in this essay I will focus on two of

these basic frames[2]: the role frame and the character frame. These situational frames define different ways in which people can perceive others' agency in a social situation and thus interpret their behaviour.

Role frame

Through the role frame, a person reads a situation in terms of the social roles involved in it. This frame locates the perceived source of actors' agency within the social roles that they are enacting. Via a role frame, we understand ourselves and others as being motivated by role demands. Thus, our own and others' situated behaviours are interpreted as oriented towards the goals and rules of appropriateness defined by certain roles (March and Olsen, 1989). This frame is rooted in the culturally legitimate scripts and schemas for coordinated activity, providing "situationally contextualized means for people to coordinate activity" through the rules and expectations defined by roles (Diehl and McFarland, 2010: 1724) and therefore ensuring the understandability and predictability of situated interaction (Merton, 1957). At the same time, even within routine situations involving well-known roles, people always enact roles with at least some minor modifications of the idealized template inscribed in the role. These modifications and adjustments can be best captured through the idea of character frames.

Character frame

Through the character frame, a person reads a situation in terms of the 'characters' that can be performed in connection with the roles involved in the situation. "Characters" are intended here as stylized ways in which in a role can be enacted in terms of emotional

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[2] Goffman (1974) distinguished natural frames –which construe events as natural occurrences not mediated or guided by actors- and social frames –which describe events as resulting from human agency. Diehl and McFarland (2010) further elaborated this basic categorization.

displays and other forms of expressivity. Via the character frame, we understand others' agency and behaviour as guided by impulsivity, creativity and emotions. The character frame is always "laminated" upon the role frame (Goffman, 1974) and there are at least two important ways in which these two frames are connected. First, the character frame can serve to reinforce the role frame upon which it is laminated. For example, Hochschild (1985)'s study of flight attendants' display of emotions demonstrated how the successful enactment of certain roles requires the 'injection of character' (Diehl and McFarland, 2010) even if those emotional displays are artificial and intentionally fabricated. Second, the character frame allows persons to display others roles that are outside the specific role frame upon which the character is laminated as well as other "valued aspects of self and style not associated with the role" (Diehl and McFarland, 2010: 1725). Indeed, roles vary in the degree of latitude they offer for the display of behaviours not directly associated with the role. At the same time, over time a repertoire of character displays will become inscribed into some roles and this will largely depend on the institutional logics in which the interactants are embedded in, as illustrated below.

Institutional logics and layered situational frames

How are institutional logics linked with situational experience and its layered frames? The key is in the socialization process through which people become embedded into different institutional orders and learn their associated logics.

People become socialized into institutional logics through situated social interactions. As people experience and interact in different kinds of situations in the course of their life, they start recognizing, situation after situation, how situations differ (or are similar) in terms of their institutional specificity. Through this process, people learn the different 'types of situations' –i.e. typified sets of roles, characters and their relationships- that characterize a

given institutional order. For example, they learn that the order of the family is constituted by specific types of situations such as family lunches and dinners, family trips, family celebrations such as Thanksgiving or Christmas, etc. That the order of democracy is characterized by types of situations such as politicians' speeches on campaign trails, protests on the street, Election Day's ballots, etc.

A person apprehends each of these situations as a gestalt of layered role and character frames, so that she will intuitively know what roles and characters are available, for example, in a typical family situation, and in what ways those roles and characters can be related. The roles and characters –as well as their relations- constituting the types of situations that characterize an institutional order will be shaped by the institutional logic governing that order in a particular historical period. In sum, it is through a person's socialization into a specific institutional order that the person learns the types of situations through which a logic manifests itself and the roles and characters available in those situations.

Since "humans live across institutions" (Friedland and Alford, 1991: 255) and through their lives become socialized into multiple institutional orders (i.e. family, state, religion, democracy, community), people learn a variety of types of situations and their corresponding, inter-layered roles and characters. From this situated perspective, the multiple embeddedness of each person in a variety of institutional orders implies that each person has learned a variety of types of situations (roles, characters and their relations) and, through this process, develop an intuitive sense of when and how to behave in different orders[3]. It is this multitude

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[3] Through her socialization in multiple institutional orders, a person learns not only a variety of order-specific situational frames, but also acquires a sense of 'what a situation is' in general terms. She comes to understand what social interaction is about and what its basic constitutive components are. She learns that, no matter what institutional order a situation is located in, she can interpret others' situated behaviour by reading their motivations and agency via role and character frames and that these frames are connected and co-exist in any situation. This understanding of "what a situation is" can be seen as a sort of meta-knowledge or procedural schema that is learned across institutional orders.

of institutionally-specific roles, characters and their layered relations that constitute the "raw materials" that people can enact in different ways through their interactions in any given situation at a specific time and place.

Institutional logics, situational experience and the transformative role of interactions

Although institutional logics contribute to the formation of a person's situational experience via the processes described above, they do not fully determine the social interactions taking place in a given situation. This is because the relationship between situational experience and actual interactions can be, and often is, loosely coupled. Situational experience provides signposts to guide and evaluate actual interactions through connected role and character frames, but it cannot fully encompass the many contingencies and the "bizarre potentials" of actual social interactions in the real world. What analytical tools can we then use to understand the loosely-coupled relationship between institutional logics, situational experience and actual interactions in a given social situation?

It is useful to start from a dynamic conception of social interaction, such as that provided by Strauss (1993)'s definition of interaction as 'acting toward others' when 'others in turn act toward, or respond to, the actions of the first actor' (p. 22). This definition puts at centre stage the relational nature of *inter*action as something that happens *between* two or more people and that, as such, should consider *both* a person's actions and people's reactions to those actions. This view is perhaps best encapsulated by Berger and Luckmann (1966):

"In the face-to-face situation the other is appresented to me in a vivid present shared by both of us…….As a result, there is a continuous interchange of my expressivity and his [sic]. *I see him smile, then react to my frown by stopping the smile, then smiling again as I smile, and so on. Every expression of mine is oriented towards him, and vice versa….To be sure, I may misinterpret some of these symptoms. I may think that the other is smiling while in fact he is smirking"* (p. 43 [added]).

From the perspective outlined here, any action and reaction occurring in a given situation does not occur in an 'institutional vacuum' but will be interpreted by the interactants

through the role and character frames constituting the institutionally-specific type of situation that they think they are in. As discussed above, through socialization people learn to recognize the different, institutionally-specific, typified situations characterizing different institutional orders. For example, when interacting with a police officer, a person recognizes the current situation as a typified situation within the institutional order of the state, constituted by certain role and character frames (e.g. the role of the citizen conventionally enacted through characters displaying unquestioning obedience and deference). These institutionally-specific situational frames do not univocally determine the interpretations of, and reactions to, a given action. But they delimit the space of possibilities for interpreting and responding to that action. Thus, a joke made by a police officer while arresting a convict may be interpreted very differently (e.g. as act of kindness to defuse the tension of the moment or as an abuse of her/his authority over the convict), but it can only be interpreted in relation to the roles and characters constituting the institutionally-specific type of situation (i.e. coerced arrest of a convict by a state official) in which that action occurs.

While multiple roles and characters are available in any situation *depending on the type of situation and the interactants' embeddedness in multiple institutions*, only a limited subset of these characters and roles will ultimately be sustained over the duration of an interaction. These characters and roles may eventually become mutually ratified and thus dominate the interaction, shaping the behaviour of the interactants and leaving more durable marks on their identities, goals and schemas. Which roles and characters will become dominant for which interactant will largely depend on the *process of interaction itself*. This is why we need a more granular conception of the interaction process than that afforded by the over-simplified stimulus-response model underlying identity verification theory (Stryker and Burke, 2000) and the TOL model. To take seriously the *inter*-active relational nature of interaction, we need to unpack the often non-linear ways in which interactions unfold,

understanding their dynamic and potentially transformative properties. While a full model of interaction dynamics is outside the space limits of this article, I outline below two key insights about the interaction process drawing from micro-interactionist research.

First, the interaction process itself has been usefully conceptualized by Randall Collins (2004) as an interaction ritual –i.e. a "mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and symbols of group membership" (Collins, 2004: 7). Interaction rituals are produced when social interactions between two or more people create *mutual attention* and *shared emotional energy* among them. When that happens, interactants are likely to interact again in the future and the positive emotions are likely to be carried over to the next interaction episodes as "traces" of past interactions (Collins, 2004). From this perspective, shared emotional energy and mutual attention are mechanisms through which different patterns of interactions can become sustained over time or rather fade out over the course of an episode of interaction. If a given interaction pattern –intended as an interlocking of actions and reactions- produces shared emotional energy and mutual attention among interactants in a given situation, that pattern is more likely to become sustained.

Since an interaction expresses the performance of certain roles and characters by interactants, this also helps explaining which roles and characters (out of the many that any person can play in a situation) may become dominant and sustained in a social situation. The roles and characters that will end up generating higher levels of emotional energy and mutual attention through the social interactions displaying them are the ones which are more likely to dominate the situation and shape peoples' situated behaviour. For example, Furnari and Rolbina (2018) show that producers in TV and music projects enact their role through different styles (i.e. characters), but only some of these styles become charged with emotional

energy and mutual attention, thus facilitating the reproduction of certain patterns of interaction at the project level.

The second insight for conceptualizing the process of interaction comes from Goffman (1974: 40-82)'s description of different processes of keyings –i.e. intended as different ways in which situational frames can be transferred by continuing to conduct the same activity but in a different manner (e.g. transforming work into play or less serious work). Through different forms of keyings, a person can loosen up the link between roles and characters that is socially ratified in institutionally specific types of situations.

Both interaction rituals and keyings are two useful ways of presenting the spontaneous, emergent and potentially transformative properties of situated social interaction. More empirical and theoretical work is needed to systematically compare and theorize these properties of situated interactions across different types of situations.

Discussion

In this essay, I offer a conceptualization of social situations that strengthens the connection between institutional logics and people's lived experience of 'being in a social situation', a key part of people's everyday life experience. I argue that situational experience can be usefully conceptualized as a gestalt of two layered situational frames: role frame and character frame. Institutional logics shape the content taken by these frames in the different typified situations characterizing different institutional orders. Via situational frames, logics condition but do not determine the social interactions taking place in a specific social situation occurring at a given time and place. Whether social interactions reproduce the existing institutionally-specific situational frames or transform them largely depends on the process of situated interaction itself. This conceptualization of social situations contributes to the development of more robust institutional micro-foundations in the following ways.

Implications for research on the micro-foundations of institutional logics

To research on the micro-foundations of institutional logics, I contribute a theory of social situations that allows to explain where situational experience comes from and how this experience is shaped by institutional logics in a non-deterministic, non-functionalist way. The cornerstone of this theory is Goffman (1974)'s insight that social situational experience is a complex gestalt of layered frames that are culturally defined and thus historically variant (Diehl and McFarland, 2010). I further develop this insight by arguing that situational frames are shaped by the logics regulating the different institutional orders in which people are socialized through the course of their life. I identify socialization into different orders as a key mechanism by which institutionally-specific situational experience is built and I show such experience shapes actual social interactions taking place in any given time and place. Thus, my main contribution to research on the micro-foundation of institutional logics is to conceptualize situational experience as endogenous to, and conditioned by, institutional orders and their associated logics[4].

Future research should productively unpack further the situated learning processes (e.g. Lave and Wenger, 1991) through which people learn logics as 'situational gestalts' rather than as chunks of modular or nearly-decomposable knowledge, as assumed by the cognitivist model underlying the TOL model of micro-foundations. The arguments put forward here encourage the use of theoretical perspectives such as situated learning and symbolic interactionism to build more solid micro-foundations. Differently from cognitive psychology theories which put at centre stage the individual, these perspectives highlight the social situation as a key unit of analysis. This focus is more consistent with the foundational

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[4] This does not equal to say that *social situations* are endogenous to logics because such situations are composed not only by situational experience but also by actual social interactions, which are partially autonomous from logics, as I have argued above.

statements of the institutional logics perspective (Friedland and Alford, 1991), which advocated for overcoming both the methodological individualism characteristic of rational choice theories and the structural functionalism of neo-institutional theories. More generally, future research can also address the assumptions underlying the imagery of multiple levels of analysis underlying the TOL model, rooted in Coleman (1990)'s so-called bath-tube model. While the fundamental assumption underlying that model is that social reality can be productively studied through multiple levels of analysis, research in relational sociology (Emirbayer, 1997) and practice theory (Nicolini, 2016) has challenged such premise, considering the fruitfulness of a flat, relational ontology that "suggests that all social phenomena, small scale and large-scale, are constituted and experienced in terms of 'micro' situations" (Nicolini, 2016: 4). The areas of overlap between the Goffman-inspired, institutional analysis of social situations outlined here and a relational ontology constitutes a promising area for future research.

Implications for the inhabited institutions approach and the study of social interactions

My main contribution to the inhabited institutions approach and the study of social interaction is to link social situations with institutional logics by identifying situational frames and their institutional content as one source of social situations' institutional specificity. Particularly, I identify situational frames as an important constitutive component of social situations and argue that people's socialization into these frames crucially links institutional logics and social situations. This approach differs from the conventional symbolic interactionism approach to the study of social situations and situated interaction (e.g. Blumer, 1986; see also Gonos, 1977).

While symbolic interactionism tends to see every social situation as unique and idiosyncratic, following Goffman (1974) I have argued that different social situations can be

compared analytically along some common dimensions (i.e. situational frames) which are constitutive of *any* situation. This analytic, comparative approach had already allowed researchers to see how situational frames vary historically (Diehl and McFarland, 2010). I add to this historically comparative approach an explicit institutional focus by illustrating how situational frames can also vary across institutional orders, thus embodying the different principles and prescriptions of different institutional logics. By doing so, I follow Diehl and McFarland (2010)'s call to theorize social situations by leveraging "the specific knowledge of the large sociocultural context within which the situation takes place" (p. 1730).

My institutional approach to social situations differs from the particularism and empiricism of symbolic interactionism because it allows researchers to identify different "typified situations" that vary in the institutional content embedded in situational frames. These typified situations distinctively characterize the major institutional orders constituting society (i.e. religion, state, democracy, profession, market, professions, community) in different historical periods. At the same time, I retain important insights from symbolic interactionism and its commitment "to appreciate more fully the "indeterminacy," of social life" (Gonos, 1977: 856) by drawing an analytical distinction between situational experience and the situated interactions that actually take place in social situations. This perspective is therefore largely compatible with symbolic interactionism and its appreciation of the rich texture of situations but attempts to re-balance this approach by also appreciating the institutional background against which situated interactions are understood. From this perspective, institutions and situations are co-implicated in social interaction, they are mutually co-instituted through social interaction. People learn what institutions are and what logics govern them through situated interaction. In most cases, situated interactions reproduce the expected patterns of interaction inscribed in situational frames shaped by logics, but they

always retain a transformative potential to re-shape and modulate existing situational frames in unexpected and variegated ways.

Relatedly, the approach outlined in this essay differs from cognitive-oriented "situationalism" (Ross and Nisbett, 1991) because it focuses on the institutional aspects of situations –i.e. on how situational experience and situational frames are constituted and learned through institutional logics via socialization. In that sense, I advocate an *institutional analysis of situations*. Such situational-cum-institutional perspective contributes to the inhabited institutions approach (e.g. Hallett & Meanwell, 2016; Leibel, Hallett and Bechky, 2017) by highlighting the importance of situational experience (and its constitutive situational frames) as the background against which people understand their social interactions as meaningful. Thus, if the inhabited institutions approach underscores that institutions "acquire their significance" via situated interactions (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006: 213), this essay unpacks a key source of situated interactions' significance.

Future research should enrich this discussion by considering different types of situational frames beyond the two examined here (role frame and character frame), including different types of natural frames such as the body frame (Merleau-Ponty, 1964) or the space frame (Lefebrve, 1991) as well as the person frame considered by Diehl and McFarland (2010). Not only different types of situational frames require more empirical and theoretical attention, but also their layered relations and their historical variation in connection with institutional logics. For example, scholars may develop new models or ideal-types of institutional logics that can specify for each institutional order, not only organizing principles such as the source of legitimacy and control, but also the types of situational frames and typified situations that those logics imply, thus responding to the call for developing new ways to represent and measure logics (Ocasio, Thornton, Lounsbury, 2017). Relatedly, while I built mostly on Goffman (1974)'s later work on frames, future research can productively

build on his earlier works (e.g. Goffman, 1959; 1967) which focus more on what I called here the second "component" of social situations –i.e. actual social interactions- exploring the how *in situ* interaction dynamics may conform or transform institutional logics' prescriptions.

Conclusion

More than two decades ago, Friedland and Alford (1991) developed the notion of institutional logic with an ambitious micro-foundational agenda: overcome both trans-historical (e.g. rational choice theories) and over-socialized deterministic models of individual behaviour (e.g. structural functionalist theories) by considering the mutually constitutive relationship between institutions and individuals. Key to this agenda was the insight that individual action is both material and symbolic. This essay constitutes a small step towards that ambitious goal by conceptualizing social situations as a key micro-foundation of institutional logics and theorizing the inter-connectedness of their symbolic (situational frames) and material (situated interactions) components. By doing so, I show the limitations of purely cognitive or socio-cognitive psychological theories to provide adequate micro-foundations and the value of sociological theories of situated micro-interaction to overcome such limitations.

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