

Explorations of French conventionalism in bringing society back into organizational analysis

April 11-12 2013

University of Innsbruck/Austria
Call for Papers/Abstracts



Workshop co-organized by:

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- Tim Edwards, Cardiff University, UK
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Interest in the institutional logics concept has accelerated in the past 10 years with the seminal work of Friedland and Alford (1991) providing the conceptual means to move New Institutionalism beyond a focus on institutional isomorphism and stability. This work is of particular significance because scholars have begun to grapple with issues concerning the dynamics of plural social orders or ‘institutional complexity’ (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta and Lounsbury, 2011; Kratz and Block, 2008) and related analytical concerns including questions of agency and the bridging of multiple levels of analysis (Thornton, 2004; Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012). Many researchers have responded to these challenges by opening new sub-themes, such as, for example, inhabited institutionalism, which draws on symbolic interactionism to consider the way actors give meaning to logics within local contexts (Binder, 2007; Hallett and Ventresca, 2009; Hallett, 2010). Yet, despite such developments and the potential for pluralistic accounts of institutional processes the extent literature remains narrowly defined with the majority of studies exploring the dominance of the market logic based on studies of competing pairs of logics. This still leaves open broader issues concerning the cultural and moral foundations of plural social orders (and not just the market) as well as unanswered analytical questions over how such social plurality shapes action in different social and organizational settings.

It is because the distinct theoretical edge offered by the institutional logics concept remains unfulfilled that scholars have begun to look further afield for theoretical constructs that can help explain institutional complexity and the scope for agency within plural social orders. In particular, there has been growing interest in the French conventionalist school of sociology and especially the seminal work “On justification” by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot (2006). The potential contribution of this approach has been recognised by leading institutional logics theorists (e.g., Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012) who see explanatory value in their taxonomy of cultural repertoires for expanding understanding of the relationship between different institutional settings and the justifications of worth

that are reflected within them. Not only does the sociology of conventions (and worth) provide the theoretical constructs to “open-up” debate around the constitution of plural social orders it also provides the conceptual architecture to develop explanations of contestation, negotiation and complexity.

For this workshop we seek papers that explore the contributions which French conventionalist school can make to recent attempts in bringing society (as broadly defined within the logics approach) back into studies of organizations. We are looking for work that is grounded in convention school’s framing of social plurality and its’ positioning between methodological holism and individualism. The workshop has special commitment to papers that use convention school’s concepts – convention, order of worth, compromise, form of engagement, situated cognition and form investment – for giving meaning to the processes through which actors engage with and make sense of different institutional settings. This could include, explorations of the moral, sacred and hidden face of institutions in the context of (and despite) the dominance of corporate and market social orders. In turn, we see considerable potential for convention theory to help explain the diverse settings and situations through which institutional orders matter and the extent to which actors’ identities are connected to these situations. Therefore, we especially seek papers that develop the methodological and conceptual opportunities afforded by convention theory as well as those that can demonstrate the applicability of convention theory for understanding institutional complexity in empirical sites.

Plenary discussion participants:

- Roger Friedland, University of California, Santa Barbara.
- Laurent Thévenot, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris.

Key dates:

- Extended abstract submission (max. 5 pages): January 18, 2013
- Send abstract submissions to info@societyconventionsorganizations.org
- Notification of acceptance: February 1, 2013
- Full paper submission: March 22, 2013

We are in the process of preparing a Special Issue on French conventionalism. More details about this as well as information on the workshop (program, hotels, travel, and registration) will be soon found at the workshop website www.societyconventionsorganizations.org. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please let us know: Julia Brandl (julia.brandl@uibk.ac.at), Thibault Daudigeos (Thibault.Daudigeos@grenoble-em.com), Tim Edwards (EdwardsTJ@cardiff.ac.uk) or Katharina Pernkopf-Konhäsner (kpernkopf@wu.ac.at).

Venue:

Innsbruck University School of Management is part of the University of Innsbruck, founded 1669, which currently hosts about 20,000 students and 3,500 employees. It is located in the center of the largest city in the Austrian Alps with 125,000 inhabitants. Innsbruck is internationally known for its picturesque downtown and the beautiful environment. It is also known as a center for mountain sport enthusiasts.