Institutional and Organizational Unconscious Theories

An Alternative Way for Explaining Challenges in Inter-Agency Cooperation

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Abstract

It is now well accepted in organizational theory that pure rationality does not exist. Other factors beyond the realm of the rational, deeply embedded in organizational life, contribute also to the decision-making process. But what are they? To this question, sociological institutionalism provides some answers that have been underused in the study of organizations. Whereas rational-choice institutionalism theory strictly emphasizes the role of structures for explaining the behaviour of organizations, sociological institutionalism adopts a much more holistic approach. Despite the fact that sociological institutionalism is well established in the academic community and its literature is very rich, there are few attempts by scholars to understand military organizations and collaboration with military organizations with this theory. Yet, sociological institutionalism (and its derivatives) suggests many paths to resolve and understand the repetitive mistakes and the internal inertia in many organizations. This paper is not an attempt to develop an exhaustive theory for organizational failures, but rather a review of literature in sociological institutionalism which might provide us with some useful elements for understanding this phenomenon.

Résumé

Dans la théorie organisationnelle, il est maintenant reconnu que la rationalité pure n'existe pas. D'autres facteurs qui dépassent les limites du rationnel, et qui sont profondément ancrés dans la vie organisationnelle, contribuent aussi au processus de prise de décision. Mais quels sont-ils? À cette question, l'institutionnalisme sociologique donne certaines réponses qui sont trop peu utilisées dans l'étude des organisations. Tandis que la théorie de l'institutionnalisme du choix rationnel met strictement l'accent sur le rôle des structures pour expliquer le comportement des organisations, l'institutionnalisme sociologique adopte une approche beaucoup plus globale. Malgré le fait que l'institutionnalisme sociologique soit bien établi dans les milieux universitaires et que sa littérature soit très abondante, les chercheurs n'essaient guère d'appliquer cette théorie pour comprendre les organisations militaires et la collaboration avec les organisations militaires. Pourtant, l'institutionnalisme sociologique (et ses dérivés) propose de nombreux moyens de résoudre et de comprendre les erreurs répétitives et l'inertie au sein de nombreuses organisations. Ce document ne vise pas à élaborer une théorie exhaustive des défaillances organisationnelles; il s'agit plutôt d'une revue de la littérature sur l'institutionnalisme sociologique qui pourrait nous offrir certains éléments utiles pour comprendre ce phénomène.

Executive summary

Institutional and Organizational Unconscious Theories: An Alternative Way for Explaining Challenges in Inter-Agency Cooperation

Pierre-Marc Lanteigne; DRDC CSS CR 2012-019; Defence R&D Canada Centre for Security Science

Introduction: It is now well accepted in organizational theory that pure rationality does not exist. Some authors, like Herbert Simon, are known for pushing forward the concept of limited-rationality. Other factors beyond the realm of the rational, deeply embedded in organizational life, contribute also to the decision-making process. But what are they? To this question, sociological institutionalism provides some answers that have been underused in the study of organizations. Whereas rational-choice institutionalism theory strictly emphasizes the role of structures for explaining the behaviour of organizations, sociological institutionalism adopts a much more holistic approach. For sociological institutionalism theorists, institutions not only encompass the rules, norms and formal organizational arrangements, but also "the symbolic system, the rational myths, the cognitive schemes, the moral models which provide a meaning system that guides human action". Institutional dynamics, according to this view, not only affect the behaviour of actors in organizations, but also their primary preferences.

Despite the fact that sociological institutionalism is well established in the academic community and its literature is very rich, there are few attempts by scholars to understand military organizations and collaboration with military organizations with this theory. Yet, sociological institutionalism (and its derivatives) suggests many paths to resolve and understand the repetitive mistakes and the internal inertia in many organizations. This paper is not an attempt to develop an exhaustive theory for organizational failures, but rather a review of literature in sociological institutionalism which might provide us with some useful elements for understanding this phenomenon.

Results: This paper is divided in three sections. First, we explore the English-speaking corpus of sociological institutionalism in outlining its major contributions. Further, we proceed in the same way for the French school of institutionalism, and the English-speaking theorists of the "unconscious" side of organizations.

Through this review of literature, we have seen that many factors might hinder inter-agency cooperation. In contrast with economic theorists who perceive of human behaviour in terms of rational choice, sociological institutionalism, psychodynamics and other approaches highlight unconscious forces and cognitive elements deeply embedded in organizational life. It is now clearly demonstrated, through a large corpus of literature that human beings act sometimes unconsciously. Humans are not totally aware of their actions even if they think they are acting rationally. The rational decision-making paradigm has failed to identify embedded processed that may hinder organizational learning and cooperation among organizations. In many ways, sociological institutionalism and the other approaches emphasizing the role of unconscious dimension of institutions provide methodological tools to understand failures and the potential for

failures in organizations. Most of these approaches share one important feature: organizations are often ineffective and some elements deeply embedded in the structure of organizations or in their organizational unconscious tend to perpetuate this ineffectiveness.

Significance: Sociological institutionalism and other theories of the organizational unconscious might offer an interesting and alternative way for understanding challenges in inter-agency cooperation. Institutional theory and other organizational unconscious theories provide researchers with many methodological tools to explore the deepest level of organizational life. This level of analysis has been neglected in the study of inter-agency cooperation.

Future plans: The ultimate purpose of this work is to provide the transversal "ground rules" for modeling meta-organizational collaboration.

Sommaire

**Théories de l'inconscient institutionnel et organisationnel :
Un autre moyen d'expliquer les défis de la coopération interorganismes**
  Pierre-Marc Lanteigne; DRDC CSS CR 2012-019; RDDC CSS

Introduction: Dans la théorie organisationnelle, il est maintenant reconnu que la rationalité pure n'existe pas. Certains auteurs, comme Herbert Simon, sont réputés pour mettre de l'avant le concept de rationalité limitée. D'autres facteurs qui dépassent les limites du rationnel, et qui sont profondément ancrés dans la vie organisationnelle, contribuent aussi au processus de prise de décision. Mais quels sont-ils? À cette question, l'institutionnalisme sociologique donne certaines réponses qui sont trop peu utilisées dans l'étude des organisations. Tandis que la théorie de l'institutionnalisme du choix rationnel met strictement l'accent sur le rôle des structures pour expliquer le comportement des organisations, l'institutionnalisme sociologique adopte une approche beaucoup plus globale. Pour les théoriciens de l'institutionnalisme sociologique, les institutions englobent non seulement les règles, les normes et les dispositions organisationnelles officielles, mais aussi « le système de symboles, les mythes rationnels, les schèmes cognitifs et les modèles moraux fournissant un cadre de signification qui guide l'action humaine ». Selon cette thèse, la dynamique institutionnelle influe non seulement sur le comportement des acteurs dans les organisations, mais aussi sur leurs principales préférences.

Malgré le fait que l'institutionnalisme sociologique soit bien établi dans les milieux universitaires et que sa littérature soit très abondante, les chercheurs n'essaient guère d'appliquer cette théorie pour comprendre les organisations militaires et la collaboration avec les organisations militaires. Pourtant, l'institutionnalisme sociologique (et ses dérivés) propose de nombreux moyens de résoudre et de comprendre les erreurs répétitives et l'inertie au sein de nombreuses organisations. Ce document ne vise pas à élaborer une théorie exhaustive des défaillances organisationnelles; il s'agit plutôt d'une revue de la littérature sur l'institutionnalisme sociologique qui pourrait nous offrir certains éléments utiles pour comprendre ce phénomène.

Résultats : Le document est divisé en trois sections. D'abord, nous examinons le corpus anglophone de l'institutionnalisme sociologique en décrivant ses grandes contributions. Ensuite, nous procédons de la même façon pour l'école francophone de l'institutionnalisme, ainsi que les théoriciens anglophones du côté « inconscient » des organisations.

Dans cette revue de la littérature, nous avons constaté que de nombreux facteurs pourraient entraver la coopération interorganismes. Contrairement aux théoriciens de l'économie qui perçoivent le comportement humain en termes de choix rationnel, l'institutionnalisme sociologique, la psychodynamique et d'autres approches mettent en évidence des forces inconscientes et des éléments cognitifs qui sont profondément ancrés dans la vie organisationnelle. Il est maintenant clairement démontré, grâce à une abondante littérature, que les êtres humains agissent parfois de manière inconsciente. En effet, les humains ne sont pas entièrement conscients de leurs actions même s'ils pensent agir de façon rationnelle. Le paradigme de prise de décision rationnelle n'a pas permis d'identifier les processus ancrés qui sont susceptibles de nuire à l'apprentissage organisationnel et à la coopération entre les organisations. À maints égards, l'institutionnalisme sociologique et les autres approches qui

mettent l'accent sur le rôle de la dimension inconsciente des institutions offrent des outils méthodologiques pour comprendre les défaillances réelles et éventuelles dans les organisations. La plupart de ces approches ont en commun une caractéristique importante : les organisations sont souvent inefficaces et certains éléments profondément ancrés dans leur structure ou leur inconscient organisationnel ont tendance à perpétuer cette inefficacité.

Importance : L'institutionnalisme sociologique et d'autres théories de l'inconscient organisationnel pourraient offrir un autre moyen intéressant de comprendre les défis de la coopération interorganismes. La théorie institutionnelle et d'autres théories de l'inconscient organisationnel fournissent aux chercheurs de nombreux outils méthodologiques pour examiner le niveau le plus profond de la vie organisationnelle. Or, ce niveau d'analyse a été négligé dans l'étude de la coopération interorganismes.

Perspectives : Le but ultime de ces travaux consiste à fournir les « règles de base » transversales pour la modélisation de la collaboration méta-organisationnelle.

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1 Introduction

It is now well accepted in organizational theory that pure rationality does not exist. Some authors, like Herbert Simon, are known for pushing forward the concept of limited-rationality. Other factors beyond the realm of the rational, deeply embedded in organizational life, contribute also to the decision-making process. But what are they? To this question, sociological institutionalism provides some answers that have been underused in the of study organizations. Whereas rational-choice institutionalism theory strictly emphasizes the role of structures for explaining the behaviour of organizations, sociological institutionalism adopts a much more holistic approach. For sociological institutionalism theorists, institutions not only encompass the rules, norms and formal organizational arrangements, but also "the symbolic system, the rational myths, the cognitive schemes, the moral models which provide a meaning system that guides human action".[1] Institutional dynamics, according to this view, not only affect the behaviour of actors in organizations, but also their primary preferences.[2]

Further, sociological institutionalism emphasises the fact that institutions act always in function of the pressures found in their institutional environment. Namely, institutions seek to protect and enhance their legitimacy, which in turn increases the probability of survival of the organization, even though it is meant to produce fruitless and counter-productive actions.[3] From this point of view, the first objective of any organization is not efficiency, but rather the quest for survival. This statement is very important for organizational analysts because it can explain organizational failures and many strange or apparently misplaced decisions that occur in organizational life.

Although institutional analysis has roots in the early days of sociological analysis to include the works of Émile Durkheim of religion and Max Weber on bureaucracy, it has gained a lot of momentum at the end of the 1970s, particularly among English-speaking scholars. Many of them used this theory for describing the changes occurring in the education and health systems, in some industry sectors, in public administration, etc. However, it is important here to distinguish between three main approaches of institutional analysis:

1. The English-speaking sociological institutionalism approach, which emphasizes the key role of legitimacy in the development, spreading and death of organizations. This approach highlights the role of regulative, normative and mostly cognitive elements for the understanding of institutions. According to this point of view, organizations are shaped by their environment, giving rise to specific types of behaviour.

2. The French approach to institutional analysis (l'analyse institutionnelle) is rooted mostly in psychiatry and cognitive sciences. For this school of thought, the definition of institution implies that the essence of any organizational action is not easily perceptible and deeply embedded in the "unconscious" side of organizations and in the external forces operating within organizations. We can find a strong influence of psychiatry in this approach given its "therapeutic" mandate. Indeed, the analyst, like a psychiatrist, intervenes in a "failed" or a "problematic" organization to induce a positive change. The

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[1] See ref. 7, 9, 25 and 35.
[2] See ref. 7, 8, 21 and 22.
[3] See ref. 30.

analyst is not neutral: he or she has the mission to change not only the organization but society as well.

3. Finally, we find among English-speaking scholars a similar account. They use a "psychodynamic" approach which refers to the influence of psychology, and Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis in sociology and in organization science. Psychodynamic sociologists attempt to explain human action in organizations on the basis of the unconscious dynamic of the human mind. For example, some authors stress the importance of psychological defence mechanisms for explaining inertia and distortion in learning processes. These authors point out the fact that bureaucratic structures in organizations might develop many deviant behaviours and counter-productive patterns among its members. Authors attempt to theorize the "unconscious" and elaborate concepts like "deep sociology", "deep structure" and "organizational identity" for explaining the influence of the human mind in the social structures and in decision-making processes in organizations. This "unconscious" way of explaining organizational behaviour is not a monolithic school by itself, as many nuances exist among the authors.

Despite the fact that sociological institutionalism is well established in the academic community and its literature is very rich, there are few attempts by scholars to understand military organizations and collaboration with military organizations with this theory. Yet, sociological institutionalism (and its derivatives) suggests many paths to resolve and understand the repetitive mistakes and the internal inertia in many organizations. This paper is not an attempt to develop an exhaustive theory for organizational failures, but rather a review of literature in sociological institutionalism which might provide us with some useful elements for understanding this phenomenon.

This paper is divided in three sections. First, I shall explore the English-speaking corpus of sociological institutionalism in outlining its major contributions. Further, I shall proceed in the same way for the French school of institutionalism, and the English-speaking theorists of the "unconscious" side of organizations.

2   The English-speaking sociological institutionalism

The literature about sociological institutionalism is more dense and developed than literature dedicated to economic institutionalism. Sociological institutionalists present institutions as a powerful force that shapes the preferences and actions of actors. Thus, sociological institutionalism is well suited for explaining transformations and inertia in organizations. A number of case studies (like hospital, schools, museums, etc.) were carried out using the institutionalist theory as their conceptual framework. However, it is important to understand what is meant by institution in this literary context.

2.1   The notion of institution

Institutions are tackled in different ways by various sociologists. There is no consensus on which components have to be included in the definition of institution. March and Olsen stressed the importance of the normative components in institutions (this approach was also called normative institutionalism by Peters). For March and Olsen, rules are the product of past lessons and cumulative experiences. This includes "routines, procedures, conventions, role, strategies, organizational forms, technologies, and also paradigms, beliefs, codes, cultures and knowledge that surround, support, elaborate, and contradict those roles and routines".[4] According to Scott, the conception of rules from March and Olsen is "quite broad" because they encompass normative and cognitive elements as well.[5] These routines assure the maintenance of organizations and are impersonal and detached from individuals, ensuring the survival of the organizations against turnover of individuals and self-interest. Despite their attention to rules, the primary focus of March and Olsen is on the normative side. Indeed, routines are learned for the purpose of appropriateness and expectations; for March and Olsen, "rules define relationship among roles in terms of what an incumbent of one role owes to incumbents of other roles".[6] Rules are the instruments for fulfilling the actors' social obligations. Selznick, an early institutionalist, developed a similar conception based on the normative dimension. For him, structures or human activities such as formal organizations "became infused with value beyond the technical requirement at hand".[7]

Even if March and Olsen and other normative theorists acknowledge the existence of rules and sanctions in institutions for controlling human behaviour, they insist on informal means for pressuring actors to act accordingly to the group's behavioural norms. This process is facilitated by socialization among actors. Thus, a sense of honour and of belonging to the group, and the fear of being excluded, are transmitted to the individual, which deter deviant behaviours, as outside the norm behaviours by one member might entail the reprobation from the rest of the group or even expulsion. In other words, while economic institutionalists embrace the idea of an external

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[4] See ref. 9 and 10.
[5] See ref. 15.
[6] See ref. 10, 35 and 46.
[7] See ref. 9 and 10.

regulation system, normative theorists emphasize an internal control mechanism shared by the actors and strengthened by socialization activities.[8]

In contrast, Berger and Luckmann stressed the importance of the cultural-cognitive components in institutions theory. Berger and Luckmann were among the first to recognize the importance of these elements in institutions theory. For these authors, social order is not given in human biology, so it is a creation of human activity.[9] According to them, all along human history, beliefs were developed through social relations. All beliefs, thoughts and other human constructs are subject to internalization. Thus, a process of construction of a "meaning system" takes place. It can be tackled in three phases. First, there is the phase of externalization by which a structure of meaning arises between the interactions of actors. The second phase is that of objectification, during which this structure of meaning is experimented in common and taken for being an objective fact by the actors. Finally, in the internalization phase, these objective representations are internalized at a deeper level among the actors through a socialization process, so that they ceased to be apparent to the actors. These three steps are what Berger and Luckmann called the institutionalization process.[10]

From this social reality becoming objective arises social roles. Beliefs are internalized by the actors into a specific set of roles within a set of prescriptions and rules. Actors know what they are expected to do according to their role. The group constructs in this fashion its own internal reality. In this context, what is called "reality" is subject to change if actors switch from one group to another. Actors then adopt different conducts, norms and roles. Contrasted with March and Olsen, Berger and Luckmann established the primacy of cognitive elements over regulative elements. The norms and expectations are derived from cognitive elements. The vision of Berger and Luckmann, which was developed in the 1960s, had a deep impact in sociology and other social sciences, and has influenced many other institutional theorists.

Rowan and Meyer echoed the vision of Berger and Luckmann. Rowan and Meyer defined institutions as "rule like frameworks, rational myths, facts taken-for-granted and knowledge legitimated through the educational systems, by social prestige, by the laws and the courts."[11] In the modern societies, formal structures of organizations generate rational myths. These myths come from rationalized routines in organizations and are deeply embedded in the structure of organizations. For instance, annual audits are rational rituals that sanction the legitimacy of organizational sub-units by showing conformity to prescribed behaviour in spite the possibility that the raison d'être of a sub-unit might be questionable from the point of view of an outsider. These ritualized myths indicate the way to choose in a particular situation and they are taken for granted as legitimate by the actors. Zucker adds that "social knowledge, once institutionalized, exists as a fact, as part of objective reality, and can be transmitted directly on that basis."[12]

It is important to note, however, that such myths are first and foremost maintained to protect internal processes from the external institutional environment. Some of these myths are borrowed by the actors from their institutional environment for increasing their legitimacy and their access

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[8] See ref. 9 and 10.
[9] See ref. 43.
[10] See ref. 14, 16 and 43.
[11] See ref. 22 and 49.
[12] See ref. 29.

to resources. A clear example is the introduction of business processes within military organizations such as balanced score cards, or business planning, that provide an impression of sound use of scarce resources. Organizations must adopt a ceremonial conformity for responding to institutional pressures. However, in reflecting on the institutional environment with ceremonial conformity, organizations "tend to buffer their formal structures from the uncertainties of technical activities by becoming loosely coupled, building gaps between their formal structures and actual work activities."[13] In other words, the adoption of sanctioned business processes that provide greater legitimacy is not meant to introduce radical changes within the organization.

Hallet and Ventresca also highlighted the cognitive conception of institutions and the structuring role of environment. According to them, institutions are inhabited by people who are engaged in diffusing the accepted mental constructs through ongoing social interaction. Social structures like bureaucracy are "actively negotiated and experienced in local interactions."[14] These structures finally become fully embedded in social life and thus, actors enact in an uncritical way the prescribed form of organizational life. This conception is entirely opposed to the rational choice institutionalism that stresses the importance of liberty of action of the actors.

Zucker, for her part, argued that institutions can be tackled in two different ways. First, "in a rule-like, social fact quality of an organized pattern of action and second, an embedding of formal structures, such as formal aspects of organizations that are not tied to particular actors or situations (non-personal/objective)."[15] Zucker stressed the importance of the institutional environment, a recurrent notion in institutional theory. All organizations are subject to conforming themselves with the "collective normative order." Change in organization is principally initiated from outside. In other words, organizations in a given organizational field are designed on the basis of "institutional elements" found in the environment.[16] Powell and DiMaggio like Rowan and Meyer, argued that in their response to this institutional pressure, organizations "protect their technical activities through decoupling elements of structure from other activities and from each other, thus reducing their efficiency."[17]

Freeman and Hannan have developed a special concept of institutions: the population ecology. This model is inspired by Darwinist biology. Freeman and Hannan argued that like biological organism, only a limited number of organizations can live in a specific environment. The biological environment "provides opportunities for only so many organisms to survive, so too the environment of organizations is capable of supporting only so many structures."[18] Indeed, according to this theory, the environment is viewed as a hostile world. For example, resources of the state are limited, and therefore the state supports (economically and politically) only a few types of organizations. Consequently, organizations must adapt within this context to survive. They must adopt the appropriate structures, values and behaviours for gaining state resources to survive. Population ecologists have developed the concept of organizational niche for understanding the role of environment at a more micro level. An organizational niche can be described as "a particular mixture of resources that enables a specific type of organization to

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[13] See ref. 48.
[14] See ref. 55.
[15] See ref. 29.
[16] See ref. 31 and 32.
[17] See ref. 23, 30 and 47.
[18] See ref. 17 and 23.

survive."[19] A special combination of elements like budgets, political support or information allows organizations to survive while others cannot. The limited access to strategic resources in a given environment affects directly the death rate of organizations. Depending on the kind of environment, some niches are wider than others, so more organizations can survive.

One interesting observation about organizational ecology is its assumption about the stability of the system. According to this theory, inertia is the normal state of an organization. "Inertia is the product of such organization-level processes as sunk costs, vested interests, and habitualized behaviour shored up by external constraints imposed by contractual obligations to exchange partners and regulatory regimes."[20] Change might be dangerous and jeopardize the survival of the organization. Organizations are not willing to change the conditions that ensured their survival up to the present. This explains why organizations offer so much resistance to change, according to this approach.

In contrast, Zucker supported the opposite view. Deinstitutionalization and fragmentation is more the norm. The entropy, i.e. "a tendency toward the disorganization in the social system" is the normal state of organizations. Structures, norms and rules tended to break down with time. Deinstitutionalization can be explained by "imperfect transmission" and erosion of roles.[21] Many other factors exist, like the loss of legitimacy associated with a particular organizational practice out of favour, or the political pressure exerted by interest groups and social pressure caused by the fragmentation of in the belief associated with existing practices.[22]

For his part, Scott developed a more integrative approach to institutional analysis. He tried to conciliate each vision of institutions. According to Scott institutions are "comprised of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life."[23] Institutions tend to be resistant to change for Scott too, as their rules, norms, values, and cognitive schemes are transmitted across generations and they are reproducible.[24] Scott stressed the importance of the three pillars of institutions: the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive systems. These elements are continually interacting with each other and moving, and each element strengthens the others, which provides a powerful force in an organization. Indeed, Scott stated that "in a stable social environment, we observe practices that persist and are reinforced because they are taken for granted, normatively endorsed, and backed by authorized powers."[25] However, Scott argued that in some cases, only one element supports the social order. One element might also have primacy over others. Scott said also that pillars might be misaligned. Each pillar might support different behaviours. This situation can lead to much confusion and many conflicts in an organization.[26] Scott also envisaged institutions as open systems, i.e. strongly influenced by their environment.[27]

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[19] See ref. 22, 23 and 47.
[20] See ref. 28.
[21] See ref. 29.
[22] See ref. 18 and 29.
[23] See ref. 15.
[24] See ref. 15.
[25] See ref. 15.
[26] See ref. 15.
[27] See ref. 15.

According to Scott, the regulative pillar concerns all the rules, the sanctions, the codes, etc. This includes all the coercive mechanisms like punishments or rewards for controlling and modulating behaviours. These mechanisms can be informal (pressure from the group) or formal (rules or law for example). Historically, Scott argued that social scientists (economic and rational choice theory) have tended to focus exclusively on this variable and forget to take into account the cultural-cognitive and normative dimensions. Scott explained that the regulative variable was well suited for explaining human behaviour in terms of interest and rational choice. According to this view, actors and organizations have an obligation to follow the numerous rules of society if they are to benefit from it.[28]

The normative pillar refers mainly to the values, norms and standards. Values refer to what is desirable whereas norms "specify how things should be done."[29] The normative pillar refers to the prescriptions that indicate how to behave in social life. Norms and values are internalized by actors and then become roles. Roles provide a set of shared expectations and prescriptions regarding a specific function in society. The roles then become institutionalized in society. Scott argued that normative conception in institutions was primarily embraced by early institutionalists like Philip Selznik.

Finally, Scott, as do many institutionalists, stressed "the centrality of cultural-cognitive elements of institutions."[30] These include all the things taken-for-granted, the share beliefs, symbols and shared understanding. The action of an actor cannot be understood only in objective conditions but it is also subject to an actor's own interpretation of reality. Every group or society has its own representation of reality which is crystallized through symbols and representations. Scott quoted Berger and Kellner about this subject: "Every human institution is, as it were, sedimentation of meanings or, to vary the image, a crystallization of meanings in objective forms."[31] These symbols and codified beliefs and patterns of thinking are then transmitted to the group and integrated by its members. The cognitive frames shared by the group affect not only the way it receives and treats the information but also the learning process. Indeed, adopting a specific way of thinking involves also a specific information selection. In the reverse order of the usual explanations proposed by those who emphasize the normative pillar, roles emerge after a common understanding of functions associated with particular actors. Scott also argued that over time, regulative and normative elements tend to be integrated into the cognitive element through the accumulation of socially validated knowledge.[32] In sum, in this way of tackling institutions, social structures are built upon shared beliefs and understanding.

Despite this attempt to synthesize these three elements into a single institutional theory, we clearly observe that the cognitive-cultural elements constitute the core of new institutional theory. In fact, reliance on cultural-cognitive elements is the distinctive character between "old" sociological institutionalism and the new one which is represented by Scott, Zucker, Meyer, Rowan, Powell and DiMaggio. As we will see, some important concepts for these institutionalists like isomorphism and legitimacy are directly linked with this cultural-cognitive conception.

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[28] See ref. 15 and 20
[29] See ref. 15.
[30] See ref. 15.
[31] See ref. 15.
[32] See ref. 15 and 22.

2.2   Institutions and legitimacy

According to sociological institutionalists, legitimacy is a key concept for understanding institutional dynamics. Institutions always act in conformity with legitimacy. For Schumann, legitimacy is "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions."[33] Legitimacy is a human construction, yet it is perceived as an objective fact by actors. It reflects the beliefs and values shared by one group. Schumann argued that organizations can act in some way despite the disapproval of some individuals because this action seems acceptable for the group. Legitimacy is also variable from one group to another. He also made a clear distinction between two kinds of legitimacy: strategic and the institutional legitimacy. Strategic legitimacy postulates first that there is a conflict within organizations between systems of belief and individual points of view. For achieving its goals, managers manipulate symbols and rituals to meet recalcitrance from the bottom of an organization and thus legitimize the organizational process. Legitimacy can be seen as "purposive, calculated, and frequently oppositional."[34] However, institutionalists do not interpret legitimacy as a managerial resource but rather "as a set of constitutive beliefs". Institutions and cultural elements penetrate and shape organizations and "determine how organization is built, how it is run, and, simultaneously, how it is understood and evaluated." Environment provides managers with guidelines and assumptions on which they base their decisions. Schumann added also that institutional legitimacy focuses on a sector of organizational life rather than focusing on a specific organization like strategic legitimacy.

For Berger and Luckmann, legitimacy is a "second-order' objectivation of meaning." The key function of legitimacy is "to make objectively available and subjectively plausible the 'first-order' objectivations that have been institutionalized […] Legitimation 'explains' the institutional order by ascribing cognitive validity to its objectivated meanings."[35] It associates a cognitive element (the knowledge) and a normative element (if an action is right or not). Thus, legitimacy provides the appropriate knowledge that justifies an action or a taboo. It gives to the institutions means to preserve themselves and to ensure enduring stability through time. Legitimacy can be viewed as a crystallisation of meaning through a slow process of accumulation of knowledge.

Scott, for his part, articulates the concept of legitimacy with his theoretical model based on the three pillars of institutions (normative, regulative and cultural-cognitive elements). Legitimate action according to the regulative pillar involves the application of the law and the rules. Normative legitimacy involves an internalized control based on values and on morals. It implies, for example, that an organization orient its actions on standards and professional norms. The legitimacy based on the cultural-cognitive pillar stresses the importance of basing an action upon a common framework or a shared definition of the situation. According to Scott, "the cultural-cognitive mode is the 'deepest' level because it rests on preconscious, taken-for-granted understandings."[36] We can observe here the idea of primacy of the cultural-cognitive pillar on

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[33] See ref. 54.
[34] See ref. 54.
[35] See ref. 44.
[36] See ref. 15 and 27.

legitimacy, an idea developed also by Berger and Luckmann. However, Scott acknowledged the role of regulative and normative dimensions on legitimacy. He argued that sometimes, the three types of legitimacy may enter into conflict. For example, conflicts might arise between the legal requirements and moral obligations.[37] Baum and Powell argued on their part that it's impossible to focus only on cognitive legitimacy and that is important to include socio-political (normative) legitimacy as well.[38]

There are many reasons to explain the quest of legitimacy by institutions. Schumann pointed out the need for enhancing the stability and the comprehensibility of organizational activities.[39] In a complex and unsettled environment, actors in organizations need to give meaning to their actions. Legitimacy can be seen as a means for validating organizational progress and for giving rationality to an action. It is also a process for giving meaning to an action and then for consolidating the cohesion of the organization. Thus, actors in institutions perceived a legitimate action like a component for achieving a collective goal.

For Meyer and Rowan (and Zucker as well), organizations seek to incorporate legitimated rationalized elements from their environment into their formal structure for enhancing not only their legitimacy, but also their resources and their survival potential.[40] In a highly institutionalized environment (like hospitals or schools), organizations must meet many standards and face contingencies. Organizations thus import rationalized myths known as efficient in the organizational field. This is made in the spirit of accountability and for seeking some resources. For example, Kamens showed how schools seek to import rational myths (like hiring emeritus professors) in their formal structure.[41] In such a context, conformity is the golden rule for reaching success. As a result, the entire organizational field proceeds in the same way with the same standards. Thus, legitimacy leads to isomorphism (see the section on isomorphism). In contrast, an organization with a lot of non-legitimized elements in its formal structure is more likely to fail because such elements are difficult to justify and are subject to reprobation from the institutional environment.[42] Institutional theory is, for Rowan and Meyer, an alternative view to standard bureaucratic theory where legitimacy is a given. The reach for legitimacy is the most important drive of any organization.[43]

 Zucker also stressed the importance of legitimacy in institutions. For her, legitimacy is "contagious" and spreads rapidly among organizations without the intervention of management. The degree of "contagion by legitimacy" depends on the type of institutional environment.[44] Indeed, the more the environment is institutionalized, the more specific forms of legitimacy will spread rapidly. For example, legitimacy is more "contagious" in the health or education sector, where organizations are quick to adopt new rules, norms or viewpoints. Echoing Meyer and Rowan, she argued that every new legitimized element integrated into an institutional environment tend to built on the previous ones. In this context, the pressures from their environment will tend to reinforce the legitimacy of certain sources of knowledge over others,

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[37] See ref. 15.
[38] See ref. 38.
[39] See ref. 54.
[40] See ref. 50 and 51.
[41] See ref. 40.
[42] See ref. 48.
[43] See ref. 49.
[44] See ref. 29.

which are then constantly recalled by actors to legitimize their actions. This process, however, may weaken more "objective" evaluation procedures as the standard can become self-referential over time, and that validity and efficiency of new elements emerging from other sources are perceived as doubtful by the organization.[45]

About this subject, Zucker and Meyer argued that legitimized elements picked up from the institutional environment are not automatically efficient or effective. Effectiveness criteria depend on the type of environment where organizations operate and on the situation. According to Zucker and Meyer, some organizations failed or showed a poor performance in spite of adhering to the "best standard." This is explained by the fact that legitimized elements are not necessarily corollary of effectiveness criteria. Effectiveness depends on survival, which is the first objective of any organization. Survival itself depends on the isomorphism process. Indeed, Zucker and Meyer stated that:

> […] given variation or uncertainty in environments, organizations sometimes engage in inefficient conduct, such as accumulating slack resources, in order to ride out later intervals of uncertainty. Following Hannan and Freeman, organizational forms can be classified crudely as specialists or generalists. Specialists engage in limited activities, do not accumulate slack or idle capacity, and perform efficiently. Generalist, by contrast, engage in multiple activities, accumulate slack and idle capacity, and tend therefore, at any point of time, to perform less efficiently than specialist. […] Under some conditions, generalists, despite lower efficiency on average, will be favoured over specialists in rates of survival.[46]

Zucker and Meyer showed that in some cases, survival imperatives and environmental contingencies strain organizations to adopt procedures legitimized by the context. In sum, organizations act in conformity with their institutional environment, "which increase access to resources and therefore survival chance, and reduces efficiency."[47]

Brunsson echoed Zucker and Meyer when he talked about the contradiction between legitimacy and efficiency. According to him, organizations face two dynamics: the technical environment and the institutional environment. The technical environment refers to all the norms linked to effectiveness and efficiency whereas the institutional environment refers to all the other external norms. These two sets of norms present in organizations often clash with each other. Two distinctive structures arise from these clashes and evolve separately in the same organization. That is to say organizations oftentimes find themselves trying to improve their external legitimacy while trying to justify such actions as improving effectiveness and legitimacy. That leads to a kind of double language and many inconsistencies and to what Brunsson referred to as hypocrite talks.[48] Managers have to deal with this duality and often make decisions that seem strange and doubtful.

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[45] See ref. 29 and 33.
[46] See ref. 33.
[47] See ref. 30.
[48] See ref. 60.

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Finally, March and Olsen added that "there are several obvious problems in assuming historical efficiency". Indeed, equilibrium between efficiency and compliance to the institutional environment is possible in theory, but quasi-impossible in practice because the institutional environments move faster than organizations. In other words, it is difficult to continue to justify actions along the same set of justifications because changes in the environment can de-legitimize previous justifications. Equilibrium in these conditions is impossible to maintain.[49]

2.3   Isomorphism

As we have seen before, the spread of legitimacy among organizations leads to conformity to what is found in the institutional environment. Institutional theory names this phenomena institutional isomorphism. The environmental conditions of an organization require the adoption of certain characteristics for improving its chances of survival. So, the organizations must adapt themselves to their situation. That leads to a "remarkable similarity" among organizations in a same organizational field: universities are all similar, hospitals are all similar, etc.[50] As we have said previously, the isomorphism process is independent of efficiency. Isomorphism is motivated principally by survival: in adopting the same characteristics rationally accepted by the environment, it is easier for organizations to justify access to resources.

Powell and DiMaggio have developed the concept of isomorphism. According to these authors, organizations "compete not just for resources and consumers, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, for social as well for economic fitness."[51] One can add as well symbolic resources. Powell and DiMaggio pointed out three distinct mechanisms by which isomorphism occur. First, coercive isomorphism results from the pressure (formal and informal) made by other organizations and the society upon an organization. Organizations must reflect the values and the norms of society, if they do not want to be ostracized. The state, according to this view, is an initiator of the isomorphism process as it is itself required to maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of its parent society by being the guarantor of social compliance by all. Formal legislation is a clear example of coercive isomorphism, where the state's regulation is used for instance to ensure that businesses have the same accountability framework through tax laws.

Second, mimetic isomorphism takes place in periods of uncertainty. In these periods, organizations imitate each other. "When organizational technologies are poorly understood, when goals are ambiguous, or when environment creates symbolic uncertainty, organizations may model themselves on other organizations."[52] In periods of uncertainty, organizations tend to replicate the existing templates to limits their expenditures of resources. Organizations tend also to imitate other organizations considered more successful or legitimate. This is made in a spirit of competition for legitimacy. It should be noted that military organizations tend to be very much prone to mimetic isomorphism.

Finally, normative isomorphism concerns the organizational change through the professionalization and the acquisition of standards. Professionalization is "the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control 'the

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[49] See ref. 11, 12 and 13.
[50] See ref. 17 and 42.
[51] See ref. 37.
[52] See ref. 34 and 37.

production of producers'."[53] The diffusion of knowledge by universities through the activities of specialists and professionals fuels this process. These specialists, who possessed great legitimacy from their knowledge, contribute to developing specific norms which then spread rapidly among management units. Further, the filtering of personnel upon hiring and promoting encourages normative isomorphism.[54] For ensuring the quality of its output and then gaining prestige and legitimacy from its environment, an organization must control the quality of its personnel according to specific environmental norms and standards, which once again are not necessarily increasing effectiveness and efficiency. However, this process standardizes the production of organization and enhances its predictability, and overall legitimacy.

2.4   Some critics of institutional theory

There exist some criticisms of sociological institutional theory. The obvious one is the ambiguity existing between organizations and institutions. Many scholars like Peters argued that the majority of the existing literature on sociological institutionalism failed to establish a clear distinction between organizations and institutions. The literature "has tended to slide all too easily from one to the other."[55] In this way, institution is a volatile concept which refers to different things. For instance, the sociological institutionalism literature developed two kinds of institutions: the organization as an institution and the environment as an institution. Despite the integrative model of Scott, confusion between institutions as organizations or as environment still persists. Peters also criticized his model in its broad categorization of pillars. He argued that Scott's definition of institutions encompass too many things and objects to be well understood. Hirch is also critical of Scott's conception of institutions. He believed that the integration of three pillars into a single concept discouraged "interpillar communication and makes the cross-fertilization of ideas unusual and unlikely."[56] Hirch thought that Scott and sociological institutionalism give too much importance to the cognitive dimension of institution. According to him, Scott did not take into account all the importance of regulative and normative dynamics in society.[57]

Further, Peters pointed out that sociological institutionalism "appears much stronger in explaining the process of creating institutions than it is in describing the characteristics of the institutions resulting from those processes."[58] It is true that sociology devoted much writing to explaining the spreading of institutions. Peters, however, acknowledges that sociological institutionalism provides a holistic view which is useful for understanding human relations. Economic institutionalism, in contrast, adopts a strictly utilitarian logic for explaining society, which provides sometimes a reductionist account.

However, Donaldson is far more virulent in his criticism of institutionalism. Like Peters, he critiques the lack of unity of institutional theory. According to him, there was a lack of consensus on several concepts that made sociological institutionalism not one concise theory, but multiple concurrent theories without coherence. The main attack of Donaldson concerns the rejection of

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[53] See ref. 37.
[54] See ref. 37.
[55] See ref. 47 and 56.
[56] See ref. 57.
[57] See ref. 58
[58] See ref. 47.

functionalism by institutional theory. He stated that "for institutionalists, structures are not functional and rational, they are irrational and of dubious effectiveness."[59] This is against all precepts of management theory which insist on structural adaptation in the aim of improving effectiveness. Institutional theory tends to forget contingencies exerted on organizations for reaching efficiency. In this sense, Donaldson depicted institutionalism as an "anti-management" theory. Donaldson also pointed out that there is a lack of empirical evidence, especially concerning the conformity of organizations to their institutional environment and the lost of efficiency.

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[59] See ref. 59

3 The French school of institutional analysis

At the same time that English-speaking scholars elaborated their conception of institutions, some French sociologists created their own approach known in French as "l'analyse institutionnelle" or "socioanalyse." Their definition of institutions is quite similar to the ones found among their English-speaking counterparts with the difference of some references to psychoanalysis. However, many differences are to be found between the two approaches mainly concerning the dynamics of institutions. Moreover, in the French school, the "analyst" takes an active role in inducing a positive change in the organization. We can find here a strong influence of psychoanalysis, cognitive science and Marxism in this approach. The French theorists made an explicit reference to the psychoanalyst school. One should note that another branch of this school is directly related to cognitive science when they explain changes occurring in educational institutions in France, and how ideological discourses get intertwined with the formal curriculum. For the purpose of this paper, however, we shall focus on the first approach which is more relevant for the overall project.

3.1 A therapeutic approach

The French school of institutionalism, in contrast to the English-speaking one, proposes an "active sociology" of institutions. This movement has its roots in the French leftist intellectual milieus of the 1960's and 1970's. Some of these scholars were involved in the tumultuous events of "mai 1968." The "analyse institutionnelle" can be broadly depicted as a movement influenced by both Marxism and psychoanalysis, as it is aiming at liberating workers from alienation and unconscious chains found in many work organizations.

In one of the founding books of the movement, Lapassade argued that "analyse institutionnelle" is the answer to the bureaucratization of society. As we will see later in the next part, the French school shared the vision of English-speaking theorists of psychodynamics, who perceived bureaucracy as a key source of problems in society. However, the French scholars are far more virulent in their critique of bureaucracy. According to Lapassade, bureaucratisation is a management disease in which a supreme authority hijacks all the power in a mechanised structure. Bureaucracy is not about delivering goods and services, but about distributing power in the hands of a few. In such a context, it is not surprising that analysts like Lapassade emphasize the role of alienation among workers. Lapassade wrote that: "Le bureaucratisme implique une aliénation des personnes dans des rôles dans l'appareil."[60] He also argued that communication channels do not work in bureaucratic structures. All the decisions come from the top and there is no real feed-back from the base. In this perspective, learning from past mistakes is difficult because there are no retroaction loops. The "group loses its voice."[61] Such an approach may appear very similar to what Franz Kafka wrote in his famous novels about bureaucracy. However, it is important to note that in spite of the changes introduced by the New Public Management and the new human resources perspectives in the last two decades, bureaucratic organizations, both public and private, remain fundamentally vertical organizations where decisions are taken by a few.

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[60] See ref. 61.
[61] See ref. 61.

Further, Lapassade adopted the idea of goal displacement in bureaucracy. The attachment of bureaucrats toward bureaucratic rites, routines and structures become a source of values and norms in themselves. This new system acts as an alienating force which strengthens the top-down requirement for bureaucratic cohesion. As a consequence of goal displacement, bureaucracy tends to resist any change. The most insidious forms of displacement occurs in bureaucratic rites enacted in the name of change such as management retreats, town hall meetings, employee surveys, re-organizations, re-naming of units, etc. Bureaucracy keeps its old habits and perpetuates its structure even if they are ineffective to deal with new situations because they appear addressing the new situation. Lapassade explained this phenomenon by stressing the importance of alienating forces on the organization over the forces of adaptation. He stated that:

> En d'autres termes: les conduits d'assimilation, c'est-à-dire: d'utilisation de schèmes élaborés pour répondre à des situations anciennes l'emportent sur les conduites d'accommodation qui supposent l'élaboration de nouveaux schèmes d'action, plus adéquats pour répondre à de nouvelles situations. Ce conservatisme –ce refus du temps– induit des mécanismes de défense et par exemple le durcissement idéologique, le refus systématique de la nouveauté et l'hostilité à l'égard de toute critique qu'on tend à considérer comme un signe d'opposition qui met l'organisation en danger.[62]

Lapassade, hence, emphasizes the role of internal dynamics used to reinforce the existing social order within an organization. This can be linked to the question of legitimacy within the organization. As there are only a few who can take decisions with real consequences, then such a special access to decision-making needs to be justified, and legitimized within the organization in order to be preserved. Bureaucratic lethargy thus constitutes a way of maintaining an existing social order without having to defend it, or even to acknowledge its existence. Similarly, ritualistic change exercises provide a false sense of change that allows the existing social order not only to be preserved but also to be reinforced in acquiring further external legitimacy in the context of the New Public Management and the new human resources fads.

For Lapassade, the solution resides in another form of organization: the self-management (auto-gestion). This is the form of management to which organizations should switch to.[63] Self-management involves the participation of all members of an organization. The decision-making process should involve all the participants to avoid alienation. In sum, the analyst must help the base of the organization to gain its autonomy. However, individuals must be first aware of their alienation by the bureaucracy. This is where the study of institutions gets its importance. The analyst must uncover the links between individuals, groups and institutions that create and maintain alienation. In this context, the "analyse institutionnelle" is an approach midway between sociology and psychoanalysis, because by making conscious what is unconscious, then real organizational change can occur. The role of the analyst is to identify and destroy these unconscious links favouring alienation to initiate a process of self-management in the group. "L'analyse institutionnelle" is clearly a non-neutral and a therapeutic approach which diverges from classic sociology. Its role is to improve or reform institutions.[64] It is interesting to note that

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[62] See ref. 61.
[63] See ref. 61 and 66.
[64] See ref. 63, 64, 68, 69 and 70.

the movement of quality circles that emerged during the 1980s under the Total Quality Management fad may appear as a form of self-management, but it was not what Lapassade and others had in mind. These quality circles were creating, in fact, further alienation among the employees by instituting an even more invasive surveillance system, as other employees became willing substitute of the management.

It is important here to clarify what is exactly an institution for the French school. Cotinaud gave a definition: "Une institution est une organisation considérée en ce qu'elle reflète, maintient et développe quelque chose d'essentiel au système économique, social et politique dont elle participe activement."[65] Institution in this sense can be understood as all the means necessary (schemes, templates, functions) which allow a group to achieve its goals. Like the English-speaking institutionalists, this definition made no clear distinction between organizations and institutions. Cotinaud stated: "organisations et institution se mêlent confusément."[66] However, there is also a strong influence of psychoanalysis in the way it is tackling institutions. The institution here can be understood also as the social and unconscious space between the individual and society.[67] To summarize, the institution, for the "analyse institutionnelle" is the political unconscious. Hence, the analyst must tackle the repression patterns operating in the political unconscious to understand how the alienation forces operate on the group.

Lourau gave in his book three analytic instruments for understanding the link between individuals and institutions. The foundation of the "analyse institutionnelle" lies on these three pillars or principles. The first one concerns the unity of the group, and is called segmentarity (segmentarité). Each human group or organization has two different and contradictory forces that unite it: a positive force (positivité) and a negative force (négativité). The positive force refers to the consensus and the solidarity through the group which acts as a cohesive force whereas negative force referred to the search of individuality by the members (affirmation en tant qu'individu). The negative forces provide social space for individuals to live as individuals, which in turn reinforce their willingness to be part of the group. These two opposite forces are essential for the maintenance of any organization. Furthermore, each sub-group or segment is also facing positive and negative forces when relating to the entire organization. The role of the analyst is to put in evidence the contractions between sub-groups which exert tensions on the whole group.[68] This type of analysis can be particularly useful to understand the dynamics between an "elite" segment and the overall organization it belongs to.

The transverse principle (la transversalité) is another principle of the French school. Each bureaucracy can be understood in terms of verticality (i.e. the hierarchy), and as having limited communication channels working horizontally. For Lourau, a group where we find these two dimensions is called an object group (groupe-objet). They are objects in the sense that only one segment of the group is developed. The object group does not tolerate those members who develop a sense of belonging to another segment. Indeed, the object group cultivates a narcissistic image of itself and keeps captive all its members in one ideology. The transverse principle, in contrast, opposes verticality and horizontality in opening communication at all levels. In this way, the whole group takes conscience of the various segment existing in an organization and begins to

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[65] See ref. 68.
[66] See ref. 68.
[67] See ref. 65, 68 and 69.
[68] See ref. 64 and 69.

accept that all segments can be autonomous (in the sense proposed by psychoanalysis, i.e. be seen as full-fledge segments who can make their own decision without having to refer to their 'parents').[69]

The last principle is the practical distance (distance pratique). The analyst must overcome the members' ignorance about their organization. According to Lourau, many members tend to ignore the rational basis of their institutional norms and rules. They are widely institutionalized but they are meaningless to the base. In this sense, the institution is senseless to the individual at the base, and only at the apex is the purpose of the institution fully conscious. One of the roles of the analyst is to facilitate the understanding of the social basis of the organization to its members.[70] This is clearly reminiscent of more recent approaches linked to the concept of the "whole-of-government" where there are attempts to establish shared values across all the hierarchical segments of public agencies.

Cotinaud discussed some other tools used by the analysts in their interventions. Most of them are based on the psychoanalytic movement. For instance, free speech (libre expression) is one of the tools prized by the analyst of this school. In the view of "analyse institutionnelle", free speech consists of resituating all the "non-dit institutionnel" like the rumours, the secrets of organization, etc. This is all the things repressed by the organizational unconscious. It allows members to liberate themselves from the constraints of their organization. Free speech also allows the analyst to discover all the segments in the organization, particularly the informal ones.[71]

If it is clear that the original "analyse institutionnelle" is a by product of the 1960s and 1970s and its proposed solutions may appear difficult to implement, it is also important to recognize that within the sphere of institutional analysis, the political dimension of rules, norms, and cognition, and more generally of the organizational unconscious cannot be ignored.

3.2   The critics of "analyse institutionelle"

The "analyse institutionnelle" approach was severely criticized. Cotinaud was one of its principal detractors. According to Cotinaud, the "analyse institutionnelle" is simply dangerous. It is not concerned with sociology and the study of institutions but is rather a militant movement. According to him, this approach has a political ideology that is too much in the way.

Cotinaud denounced the desire of the analysts of this movement to dissolve all the positive force (posivité) in organizations. Such actions might be dangerous for social order. Any institution needs a positive order. An emphasis on individualism and the negative side of the institution might bring instability. Indeed, this approach tends to dissolve all authority through self-management. A minimum of authority is needed in all organizations for ensuring social cohesion.[72]

Cotinaud criticized openly the strategy of free speech. He thought it is hazardous to say anything anyhow in the organization. "Tout dire et tout faire" is not necessary good for an organization. It

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[69] See ref. 64 and 69.
[70] See ref. 64 and 69.
[71] See ref. 69, 71 and 72.
[72] See ref. 73.

induces permissiveness and the total rejection of authority. He though that "analystes institutionnelles" misinterpreted Freud. Freudian theory is based on the coexistence of two poles: pleasure and reality. Human beings need a balance between these two poles. An emphasis on reality leads to neurosis whereas an emphasis on pleasure leads to delinquency. The "analysts", with their methods, exploited only the pleasure principle. This can lead to the delinquency of the organization.[73]

Finally, Cotinaud warned the public about the real intentions of the analysts of this movement. According to him, the "analysts" hide their real intentions when they propose their services to organizations. Their real intention is not to respond to a need expressed by a client, but rather to change society in accordance with their own political views.[74]

In spite of the militant nature of "analyse institutionnelle" and the unrealistic ambitions of its founders, it is important to underline that it offers an important complement to other approaches by emphasizing the political dimension of institutional arrangements. If legitimacy is at the heart of any institution, it is important to remember that some benefit from it more than others. As well, it also underlines that institutional dynamics can be buried deeply into a collectively shared unconscious, and that to uncover such deep dynamics one must look into what is not said, and what only a handful might be aware of.

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[73] See ref. 73.
[74] See ref. 73.

4   Unconscious and deep structures

Many scholars stressed the influence of the human mind on society and organizations. Some of these authors highlight the role of psychology for understanding social phenomenon and try to tackle individuals and society at the deeper level, i.e. at the level of the unconscious. This is a force, the unconscious, which guides human action.

An important group of scholars stressed the influence of the human mind in the dynamic of organizations and society. The psychodynamic of organizations is mostly based on the ideas and concepts developed by Sigmund Freud.[75] Even if Freud's work concerns mainly the study of individual behaviour, he was also interested in explaining social behaviour. The Freudian perspective suggests that many ideas about the human psyche can be used to study organizations or societies. Basically, psychodynamic theorists see organizations as a "product of human mind and human actions."[76] Psychodynamic authors are also critical about the standard theories of organizations. Gagliardi stressed the fact that organizations theorists were over-influenced by rationalist utilitarianism. They failed to take into account several parts of human behaviour like the perception of reality, attraction, repulsion, love, hate, etc.[77]

Baum is a pioneer in the psychodynamics of organizations. The title of his masterful book, *The Invisible Bureaucracy*, lets the reader apprehend the role of the unconscious in organizations. His work focused on the psychological structure of bureaucracy and starts with four general assumptions: first, "people think both consciously and unconsciously", second, most part of unconscious thinking concerns anxiety generated by work and the way to avoid it through the interactions with other people, third, "people attempt to defend themselves against pain and anxiety by concealing unpleasant thought" and finally, adults, even with high education, sometimes do a wrong assessment of their social situation and may act intuitively like a child.[78] According to Baum, three important features shape the psychological structure of bureaucracy. First, bureaucracy is a highly hierarchical organization in which responsibility is dispersed. "Workers may lack authority necessary to carry out their responsibilities." Second, workers have few contacts with their superiors who evaluate them. Superiors in a bureaucracy are often unavailable or invisible to their employees. Finally, "responsibilities, authority, and relationships among bureaucratic members may be ambiguous."[79] Indeed, workers have oftentimes difficulties to meet the expectations of their superiors because they are stated in ambiguous ways. Ambiguity may also lead to frustration and insecurity among workers.

These three characteristics may fuel an unconscious response from the workers. The feeling of being powerless and submitted to an invisible authority might trigger some behaviour in workers

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[75] Freud psychoanalytical theory explained the dynamic of human psyche in three forces: the Id, which represents the primary drives (death and sex instinct), the Ego which acts as a censor system for controlling human drives (repression) and allows him or her to live in society and finally, the Super-Ego which acts as a regulation system between the Id and the Ego. According to the Freudian theory, the Id and the Ego represented the unconscious side of human psyche. See ref. 77, 83 and 92.
[76] See ref. 77 and 83.
[77] See ref. 82.
[78] See ref. 91 and 92.
[79] See ref. 94.

like anxiety. To avoid anxiety, workers create compensation, which means an escape into fantasy. This parallel world created by workers allows them to alleviate their stress. Baum wrote:

> In response, bureaucrats may fashion a psychic 'double identity'. Overtly, they work on organizational problems, collecting information and meeting with people as required. Covertly, they imagine themselves escaping and engage in activities that symbolically remove them the organization's stresses. In fantasy they create an alternative organization that comes closer to providing a satisfying psychological contract.[80]

These escapes might have dramatic consequences in the whole organization. Workers involved in such activities waste much energy and are less efficient at work. It results in a disengagement from their formal work.

Bureaucracy might also cause psychological defence from bureaucrats. Doubt, shame and guilt are examples of these particular defences. Doubt, according to Baum, "is closely associated with anxiety about being shamed by persons in authority who are assumed to be stronger intellectually and in other, poorly defined ways."[81] Bureaucrats cannot argue with authority and consequently feel ashamed and powerless. Their opinions are not taken into account by their superiors. Confrontation and clash of ideas are not allowed in bureaucracy. Persistent doubt is an unconscious response from bureaucrats to "punish" the organization: if they are not allowed to confront the planning and arguing with their superiors, their constant doubt "is an effort to annihilate and punish an organization that apparently denies a satisfying psychological contract."[82] Persistent doubt is also a means for workers to control a situation apparently uncontrollable. However, it produces many ambiguities and confusion which reduces the overall efficiency of organizations.

Shame is also an unconscious defence mechanism which allows bureaucrats to avoid any assertions. Thus, bureaucrats protect themselves against retaliations from their superiors for expressing their ideas. Guilt is a feeling also associated with shame. Baum depicted guilt as "a fear of moral punishment or exclusion for an offense against another person in violation of important values about social responsibility."[83] Workers usually prefer to be blamed for their ignorance rather than expressing guilt from a mistake or "inappropriate" action. All these feelings hinder thinking in organizations and thus contribute to its stagnation.[84]

Diamond echoed Baum in his analysis of bureaucracy. For him, bureaucracy is a social construct system, or an externalized self-system based on the human personality. Bureaucracy is not only a rational production system based on impersonal norms and rules. It is, according to Diamond, a system which assures and perpetuates the security needs of man. Bureaucracy is a system designed for fighting anxiety. Indeed, "hierarchical and impersonal, it encourages defensive behaviour and self-protectiveness which uses self-system components of personality for

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[80] See ref. 96.
[81] See ref. 95.
[82] See ref. 95.
[83] See ref. 95.
[84] See ref. 95 and 98.

maintenance of security and avoidance of anxiety."[85] In sum, bureaucracy can be understood as the institutionalization of "interpersonal defensive operation,"[86] where people can "hide" behind rules and norms to avoid the stress linked to ambiguity and performance.

Many defensive mechanisms assure the "security" of bureaucracy. The self-system processes a selection of information which evacuates the bad experiences to avoid anxiety, which contributes in turn to distorting reality. This censor system changes not only our perception of reality, but also our capacity to learn. Indeed, the self-system narrows our cognition's scope to only a few well established routines. It prevents bureaucrats from facing impromptu and stressful new situations and then they avoid anxiety linked with these activities. This censorship system shapes the organizational vision of the environment by suppressing disturbing elements and by rendering a situation more comfortable and predictable. In this sense, this system enhances the organization's feeling of security. However, this process jeopardizes the capacity to learn from past experience and to adapt to a new situation.[87] A new situation is automatically seen as a threat to the system. This explains why bureaucracy is so reluctant to change and put much resistance to any attempts to change its habits and why errors are always repeated. The more the environment is stressful, the more the distortion of this environment by the organization is high.

Diamond noted that the defensive mechanism involved the learning of routines, also named ritualistic behaviours. These rigid routines are rigorously applied by workers for the purpose of controlling a situation that, otherwise, will escape any control by the workers. In other words, routines are learned to avoid stress and anxiety associated with new situations, however ill-suited they may be. Diamond pointed out that these routines are not necessarily efficient and seemed sometimes irrational. In some situations, they have counter-productive effects. Diamond quoted Menzies' study of nurses in a hospital. Junior nurses, in a spirit of controlling the situation and avoiding new stressful situations, sometimes acted "contrary to the patients' needs for Recovery"[88] by insisting on maintaining the use of certain assessment tools that is clearly useless after a certain time. The ritualistic defence may also become an end in itself and then squander the energy of workers.

Diamond argued that bureaucracy, with its preoccupation for control, accountability, its focus on process and its excessive reliance on impersonal norms, fosters the emergence of ritualistic defence. He quoted on this subject Merton who "suggested that dysfunctions arise from bureaucrat's preoccupation with control over subordinates and insistence on the 'reliability of response'."[89] The structure of bureaucracy encourages such ritualistic defence and may lead to much organizational pathology like over conformity or goal displacements. Bureaucracy encourages also submission to authority. That also leads to the creation of vicious circles in the learning process of organization in their incapacity to conceive environment differently. Diamond also pushed forward the concept of organizational identity for understanding the dynamics of the unconscious in organizations. Organizational identity can be understood as "the totality of repetitive patterns of individual behaviour and interpersonal relationships that, when taken

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[85] See ref. 74 and 76.
[86] See ref. 74.
[87] See ref. 74 and 76.
[88] See ref. 77.
[89] See ref. 77.

together, comprise the unacknowledged meaning of organizational life."[90] Organizational identity is the agglomeration of all defensive schemes found in an organization. These patterns contribute to shape the self-esteem of an organization and define its perception and management of potential threats at its own security.

Brown and Starkey developed the link between organizational identity and learning. They argued that organizational learning is hindered by the "organizations' efforts to preserve their identities."[91] Organizations are not motivated to learn because it calls into question their identity. Learning implies challenging some routines or things taken for granted by the organization. Any questioning about identity fuels anxiety, so organizations elaborate unconsciously some defence mechanisms for preserving the status quo and their identity. In other words, defensive barriers set up by organizations have a negative effect on its cognitive capacities.[92]

From a psychodynamic perspective, the ego assures an identity maintenance system for preserving its self-esteem. This maintenance system encompasses many strategies. Denial is one of these strategies. It consists of refusing to accept reality and to "disclaim knowledge, responsibility and consequences". Rationalization, another defence mechanism, is the justification of an action, need or behaviour in terms "both plausible and consciously tolerable". Usually, rationalization is used for giving a "rational" account of non-action in organizations. Further, idealization is a mechanism by which something is overvalued and cleared from any negative point. This process results in a "glorification" of strengths and capacities of an organization and then leads to wrong assessments of a situation. Fantasy is another mechanism depicted by Brown and Starkey as "a kind of vivid daydream that affords unreal, substitutive satisfactions."[93] It is a psychological consolation by which workers tend to forget the difficulties of the organization. Finally, symbolization is a process by which an external object becomes a representation of an internal and hidden object, idea or person. In a context of uncertainty, symbolization is a mean for reducing anxiety in giving sense to an object. This linkage contributes to preserve the organizations' understanding of the world. Despite these many hindrances to organizational learning, Brown and Starkey argued that an organization might learn efficiently if it embraces the identity of a learning organization. This new identity stresses the fact that organizational identity is never closed and might change with time. Workers and managers must develop a critical sense and openly discuss the future of the organization.[94]

Kets de Vries is another important author in organizational psychodynamics. He developed five cultures or neurotic styles of organization. These can be understood as psychological ideal types of organization. First, the paranoid organization is characterized by distrust, hostility and suspicion. The superiors consider employees as incompetent and refused to take their opinion into account. A climate of suspicion is then institutionalized and power is concentrated in a few hands. There are many consequences: the fear of innovation, a high conservatism and the propensity to react to the events rather than anticipate. Second, the depressive style of management is characterized by hopelessness and helplessness. The managers of this style lacked confidence and seek the protection of someone else. They adopt a passive style of management, become very

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[90] See ref. 75 and 78.
[91] See ref. 79.
[92] See ref. 79.
[93] See ref. 79.
[94] See ref. 79.

conservative, refuse to innovate and prefer small routines. In sum, they adopt the way of avoidance. In the dramatic style, the subordinates tended to idealize a charismatic leader and ignored their weaknesses. This style of management required an absolute conformity to the leader who concentrates power in his or her hands. The compulsive style of management is characterized by the fear of managers to be at the mercy of events. The principal preoccupation of managers is controlling anything that might affect the lives of subordinates. All aspects of organizational life are codified in norms, standards, rules, etc. This organization focuses on efficiency, conformity, dogmatism and its lack of flexibility sometimes leads to stupid behaviours. Leaders in such organization usually distrust their subordinates and exert a rigid control. Bureaucracy is associated with this style of management. Finally, the schizoid organization is characterized by the need of detachment. Managers avoid entering into contact with subordinates and stay distant. Information is retained and used as a political tool, leading to many problems of cooperation and communication in the organization. According to Kets de Vries, healthy organizations must have a mixture of personality type. A pronounced type of personality gave a good picture of the structure, culture and strategy of an organization.[95]

Another author, Denhardt, stressed the importance of permanent conflict between organizational norms and individual meaning. The imperatives of bureaucracy (thinking and acting rationally, importance of outcomes, etc.) are in contradiction with the psychological needs of its members, like the need for creativity. In bureaucracy, there are few places for individual expression. There is always an ambiguity between the need for security provided by the organization and personal development. Individuals are also seeking immortality through their organization. Indeed, death defies the rationality of individuals. Individuals, unconsciously, attempt to reach immortality with symbols and myths in their organizations.[96]

Aurellio, for her part, argued that organizational culture can be tackle as a manifestation of the human mind or psyche. Some aspects of organizational life emerged from the unconscious. Organizational culture can be understood as the producing of a structure of conscious and unconscious thought which results from the interaction of members of an organization. The conscious level of an organization encompasses all the shared norms, behaviours, values and the organizational policies and practices like ceremonies, myths, technologies, etc. However, the unconscious level is least accessible. That encompasses "thoughts and feelings about life in general and their organization in particular."[97] This level of analysis is complex and many concurrent methodologies can be applied for understanding the organizational unconscious.

Aurellio, like many authors in this field, made a reference to the Jungian concept of collective unconscious for understanding the group's behaviour. According to Jung, all people own, within their individual psyches, a collective psyche which contains several archetypes. These archetypes are "pre-existing structures" that animate psychic life.[98] Archetypes themselves are only accessible through myths. According to Jung, these archetypes are common for all humankind. They are the product of human evolution. The Jungian conception of archetype was used among English-speaking scholars to understand organizational behaviour and was borrowed by many other fields of study. However, Jungian theory was widely criticized for its pseudo-scientific

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[95] See ref. 90.
[96] See ref. 85, 86 and 87.
[97] See ref. 80.
[98] See ref. 80, 81, 88 and 116.

character and for certain deviances toward mysticism. Some scholars also pointed out the confusion around the collective unconscious developed by Jung.[99] In any event, it is possible to investigate organizational myths as windows to the organizational unconscious.

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[99] See ref. 88 and 116.

5   Conclusion

Through this review of literature, we have seen that many factors might hinder inter-agency cooperation. In contrast with economic theorists who perceive of human behaviour in terms of rational choice, sociological institutionalism, psychodynamics and other approaches highlight unconscious forces and cognitive elements deeply embedded in organizational life. It is now clearly demonstrated, through a large corpus of literature that human beings act sometimes unconsciously. Humans are not totally aware of their actions even if they think they are acting rationally. The rational decision-making paradigm has failed to identify embedded processed that may hinder organizational learning and cooperation among organizations. In many ways, sociological institutionalism and the other approaches emphasizing the role of unconscious dimension of institutions provide methodological tools to understand failures and the potential for failures in organizations. Most of these approaches share one important feature: organizations are often ineffective and some elements deeply embedded in the structure of organizations or in their organizational unconscious tend to perpetuate this ineffectiveness.

For instance, sociological institutionalism has shown that many elements deeply rooted in the institutional environment might affect the effective running of organizations. Most of these theorists tackled institutions mostly emphasized the cultural-cognitive elements.

The French school of institutionalism (analyse institutionnelle) and the psychodynamic school also highlighted the problems met by the bureaucracy. Again, these approaches are valuable for understanding problems in highly hierarchical structures (like governmental departments or the military) and for tacking problems of adaptation when facing new situations. The French school emphasizes the alienation of individuals toward the bureaucratic structures.

The psychodynamic approach, however, highlights the role of psychological structures of bureaucracies. Theorists of this approach have demonstrated that highly hierarchical structures favour the production of unconscious and undesirable behaviour which might have dramatic consequences for the organizations. These reactions are mainly linked to anxiety and might produce distortion in the perception of reality and even in the learning process. This approach can be very useful for apprehending change in organizations and the effect of authority on the individual

In terms of concluding remarks, sociological institutionalism and other theories of the organizational unconscious might offer an interesting and alternative way for understanding challenges in inter-agency cooperation. Institutional theory and other organizational unconscious theories provide researchers with many methodological tools to explore the deepest level of organizational life. This level of analysis has been neglected in the study of inter-agency cooperation.

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DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA

(Security classification of title, body of abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the overall document is classified)

1. ORIGINATOR (The name and address of the organization preparing the document. Organizations for whom the document was prepared, e.g. Centre sponsoring a contractor's report, or tasking agency, are entered in section 8.) Pierre-Marc Lanteigne (Canadian Forces College); DRDC Centre for Security Science	2. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION (Overall security classification of the document including special warning terms if applicable.) UNCLASSIFIED (NON-CONTROLLED GOODS) DMC A Review: GCEC June 2010

3. TITLE (The complete document title as indicated on the title page. Its classification should be indicated by the appropriate abbreviation (S, C or U) in parentheses after the title.) Institutional and Organizational Unconscious Theories: An alternative Way for Explaining Challenges in Inter-Agency Cooperation

4. AUTHORS (last name, followed by initials – ranks, titles, etc. not to be used) Lanteigne, Pierre-Marc

5. DATE OF PUBLICATION (Month and year of publication of document.) October 2012	6a. NO. OF PAGES (Total containing information, including Annexes, Appendices, etc.) 43	6b. NO. OF REFS (Total cited in document.) 121

7. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (The category of the document, e.g. technical report, technical note or memorandum. If appropriate, enter the type of report, e.g. interim, progress, summary, annual or final. Give the inclusive dates when a specific reporting period is covered.) Contractor Report

8. SPONSORING ACTIVITY (The name of the department project office or laboratory sponsoring the research and development – include address.) Technology Investment Fund Project: 10af

9a. PROJECT OR GRANT NO. (If appropriate, the applicable research and development project or grant number under which the document was written. Please specify whether project or grant.)	9b. CONTRACT NO. (If appropriate, the applicable number under which the document was written.) 2008-0234-SLA (DRDC CORA and RMC)

10a. ORIGINATOR'S DOCUMENT NUMBER (The official document number by which the document is identified by the originating activity. This number must be unique to this document.) DRDC CSS CR 2012-019	10b. OTHER DOCUMENT NO(s). (Any other numbers which may be assigned this document either by the originator or by the sponsor.)

11. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY (Any limitations on further dissemination of the document, other than those imposed by security classification.) Unclassified

12. DOCUMENT ANNOUNCEMENT (Any limitation to the bibliographic announcement of this document. This will normally correspond to the Document Availability (11). However, where further distribution (beyond the audience specified in (11) is possible, a wider announcement audience may be selected.)) Unlimited

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It is now well accepted in organizational theory that pure rationality does not exist. Other factors beyond the realm of the rational, deeply embedded in organizational life, contribute also to the decision-making process. But what are they? To this question, sociological institutionalism provides some answers that have been underused in the study of organizations. Whereas rational-choice institutionalism theory strictly emphasizes the role of structures for explaining the behaviour of organizations, sociological institutionalism adopts a much more holistic approach. Despite the fact that sociological institutionalism is well established in the academic community and its literature is very rich, there are few attempts by scholars to understand military organizations and collaboration with military organizations with this theory. Yet, sociological institutionalism (and its derivatives) suggests many paths to resolve and understand the repetitive mistakes and the internal inertia in many organizations. This paper is not an attempt to develop an exhaustive theory for organizational failures, but rather a review of literature in sociological institutionalism which might provide us with some useful elements for understanding this phenomenon.

Dans la théorie organisationnelle, il est maintenant reconnu que la rationalité pure n'existe pas. D'autres facteurs qui dépassent les limites du rationnel, et qui sont profondément ancrés dans la vie organisationnelle, contribuent aussi au processus de prise de décision. Mais quels sont-ils? À cette question, l'institutionnalisme sociologique donne certaines réponses qui sont trop peu utilisées dans l'étude des organisations. Tandis que la théorie de l'institutionnalisme du choix rationnel met strictement l'accent sur le rôle des structures pour expliquer le comportement des organisations, l'institutionnalisme sociologique adopte une approche beaucoup plus globale. Malgré le fait que l'institutionnalisme sociologique soit bien établi dans les milieux universitaires et que sa littérature soit très abondante, les chercheurs n'essaient guère d'appliquer cette théorie pour comprendre les organisations militaires et la collaboration avec les organisations militaires. Pourtant, l'institutionnalisme sociologique (et ses dérivés) propose de nombreux moyens de résoudre et de comprendre les erreurs répétitives et l'inertie au sein de nombreuses organisations. Ce document ne vise pas à élaborer une théorie exhaustive des défaillances organisationnelles; il s'agit plutôt d'une revue de la littérature sur l'institutionnalisme sociologique qui pourrait nous offrir certains éléments utiles pour comprendre ce phénomène.