

From a ‘Cultural Dope’ to a ‘Heroic Entrepreneur’ – Tracing the Origin of Institutional Entrepreneurs’ Skills by Means of Reflection-in-Action

Abstract

Institutional entrepreneurs are said to possess social skills, which enable them to initiate institutional change. These skills can be divided into analytical, empathic and strategic skills. Although these findings bring us a step closer in decoding the paradox of the embedded agency, some questions remain unanswered. It remains unclear why some actors possess these skills, while others do not. The paper assumes that a reflection-in-action process, which is initiated by institutional pluralism, causes the emergence of institutional entrepreneurs’ skills. This process consists of four phases: (i) ‘Problem framing’ (the setting of an unfamiliar situation); (ii) ‘Analysing repertoire-knowledge’ (learning from similar situations); (iii) ‘Considering fundamental methods of inquiry and overarching theories’ (applying alien techniques on challenging situations); (iv) ‘Analysing the process of reflection-in-action’ (experimenting on challenging situations). By studying a Swiss spatial planner from a middle-sized town, who is in regular interactions with stakeholders from different logic backgrounds, preliminary findings indicate that institutional pluralism causes a reflection-in-action process. However, further studies on other spatial planners are needed to examine whether reflection-in-action leads to the acquisition of institutional entrepreneurs’ skills.

Introduction:

A well-known puzzle that prevails in institutional theory is the paradox of the embedded agency (Battilana & D’Aunno, 2009). Holm (1995) puts it in a nutshell by asking: "How can actors change institutions if their actions, intentions, and rationality are all conditioned by the very institution they wish to change?" (p. 398). The existence of proactive institutional entrepreneurs who shape and create institutions contradicts to new institutional key assumptions, which asserts human actions guided by prevalent institutions.

From this puzzle has resulted a huge amount of theoretical and empirical studies in order to tackle it (see for instance Beckert, 1999; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006; Rao et. al., 2003).

Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum's (2009) review provides a good summary of these studies, as it includes relevant works about institutional entrepreneurship since the concept's emergence. They conclude that institutional entrepreneurship can be best described as a three step procedure: it is triggered by specific field characteristics (phase 1) that leads to the activation of institutional entrepreneurs' measures (such as the creation of a vision and the mobilization of actors behind this vision) (phase 2) and closes by institutional change (phase 3).

Fligstein (1997) emphasizes that not everybody is able to successfully apply such institutional entrepreneurs' measures: Specific social skills are needed, which have been identified by himself and by other scholars (see for instance Arpin et al., 2016; Garud et al., 2007; Perkmann & Spicer, 2007). Although their insights brings us another step closer in decoding the black box of institutional entrepreneurship's existence, some questions remain unanswered: Why do certain actors or which kind of actors possess these skills or rather how do these skills evolve? Is it sufficient by saying that some actors are naturally more skilful than others (Fligstein, 2001), which causes a division of society into "cultural dopes" and "heroic entrepreneurs" (Chandler & Hwang, 2015, p. 1467; Hardy & Maguire, 2008, p. 213)? Or mustn't we closely detect the emergence of these skills to tackle the paradox of the embedded agency?

Relevant progress in this direction has been offered by the literature about microfoundations of institutional theory (Powell & Colyvas, 2008). By examining the micro-process of institutional change, individuals' actions and interactions, their psychology and cognitive capacities becomes the centre of investigation (see for instance Sieweke, 2013). From this perspective, "sensemaking" and "status expectations" are relevant concepts to detect the top-down process, which describes institutions' effect on individual behaviour (Powell & Colyvas, 2008). "Performativity" and "interaction rituals", on the other hand, provide crucial insights to understand the bottom-up process; meaning, the process of how institutions are maintained by individual actions (ibid.).

Putting focus on these vertical processes is relevant to understand the existence and maintenance of institutions. In addition, determining the arrangement of these processes provides insights about the causes behind institutional change. Powell and Colyvas (2008) emphasize that studying the opposite directions of the processes is a promising approach to

identify institutional change (p. 4). Gray, Purdy and Ansari's (2015) study demonstrate the usefulness of this approach: They explain different ways of how actors can create new frames, which can initiate new meanings for involved actors and can therefore lead to institutional change.

Further, it exists a need to examine the horizontal processes (the learning processes), which can explain actors' development phases from a "cultural dope" to a "heroic entrepreneur". As Chandler and Hwang (2015) argue, we should "learn from learning theory". They conceptualize how organizational learning theories can shed light on the cause of institutional change: While organizations learn consciously or unconsciously from other organizations and other fields, new institutions evolve, which are adopted by other organizations.

This paper concentrates on learning processes to tackle the paradox of the embedded agency as well. However, the level of investigation stays on the micro-level of institutional theory. I therefore try to identify how individuals acquire social skills, which are needed in order to achieve institutional change. I am going to argue that the literature on Reflexive Management Learning (as summarized by Cotter & Cullen, 2012) can provide relevant insights in this regard.

In order to achieve this goal, I choose the following procedure:

First, I summarize relevant literature on institutional entrepreneurs' social skills, which are said to be essential when trying to initiate institutional change; this review puts focus on Fligstein's (1997) work about social skilled actors, but integrates other relevant studies in this context. Second, I recapture the introduced paradox of the embedded agency and I try to explain how focusing on an individual learning process may bridge this contradiction. Third, I explain why and how literature on Reflexive Management Learning provides relevant indications in order to depict the cause and characteristics of such a micro-level process. Based on this literature, I present a model that aims to illustrate a reflective learning process, from which hypotheses on the cause of institutional entrepreneurs' skills can be deduced. Finally, on the example of a spatial planning case in Switzerland, I describe this reflective learning process in further depth.

Skills of Institutional Entrepreneurs:

DiMaggio (1988) has introduced the concept of institutional entrepreneurship, as explanation on how institutional change under the consideration of new institutional theory is possible: “Institutional entrepreneurs are actors who have an interest in modifying institutional structures or in creating new ones, and have enough resources to do so” (DiMaggio, 1988; Battilana, 2004). Institutional entrepreneurs are therefore organizations as well as individuals, who intentionally aim to reform institutions.

Although the aim of introducing this new concept was to bring clarity into the new institutional research programme, it has raised many questions, which has resulted in a number of various studies (see for instance Beckert, 1999; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006; Rao et al., 2003). The initial theoretical core of new institutionalism considered actors as individuals and organizations guided by prevalent institutions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). For this reason was the actors’ revival as originator of institutions a surprise. Beside or explicitly because of the concept’s discrepancy, several scholars have seen this paradox as a challenge and have tried to better understand the phenomenon. According to Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum (2009), these studies can be divided into three different phases of institutional entrepreneurship (see figure 1):

Scholars belonging to the first phase try to name the conditions that trigger institutional entrepreneurship (see for instance Child et al., 2007; Greenwood et al., 2002). For instance, Clemens and Cook (1999) consider the heterogeneity of institutional arrangements as a situation, in which skilful actors perceive contradictions and therefore enough freedom for institutional work. The possibility to act depends also on an actor's social position. However, both dominant and peripheral actors have been identified as potential institutional entrepreneurs (see for instance Sherer & Lee, 2002; Hensmans, 2003).

Studies of the second phase examine necessary actions of institutional entrepreneurs in order to initiate change. These scholars argue, amongst others, that institutional entrepreneurs create visions for divergent change (Rao et al., 2000) and mobilize allies behind their visions (Lawrence et al., 2002).

Finally, inquiries of the third phase focus on the actual institutional change that completes the process of institutional entrepreneurship (Battilana et al., 2009).

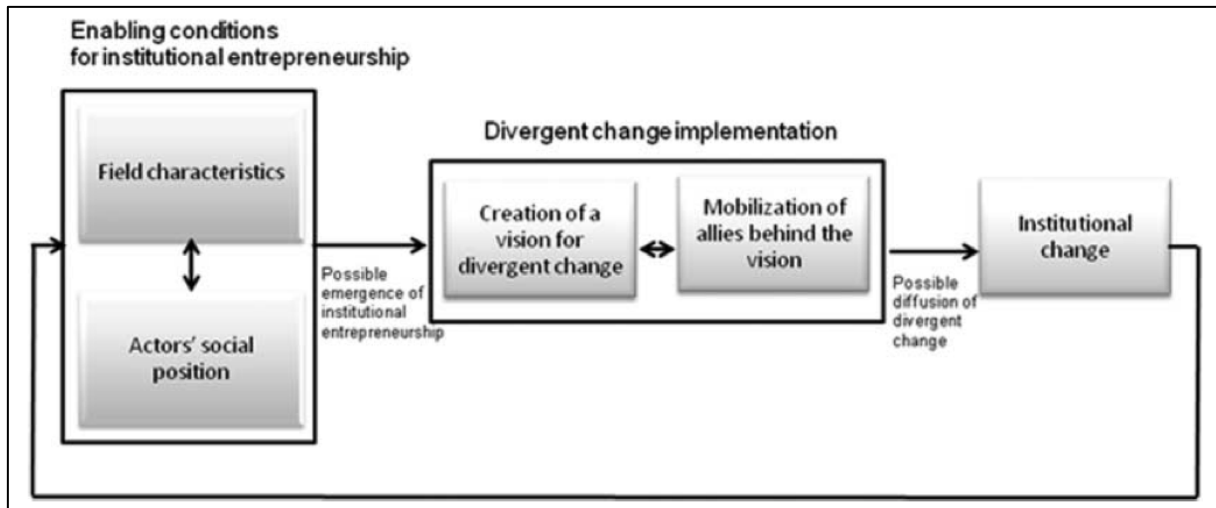


Figure 1: Model of the Process of Institutional Entrepreneurship (ibid., p. 87).

This three phases theory of institutional entrepreneurship punctuates the two origins of institutional entrepreneurship: First, external factors are essential in order to initiate institutional entrepreneurship (such as heterogeneous field characteristics); second, specific actors (individuals or organizations) need to finally make use of these changing conditions to introduce institutional change.

These institutional entrepreneurs are said to possess social skills that enables them to take appropriate actions for initiating change. Such skills can be divided into three categories (see table 1): (i) *analytical skills* that institutional entrepreneurs allow to recognize upcoming ambiguities within a field / an organization; (ii) *emphatic skills*, which permits skilled actors to find allies and convince them for alternative visions; (iii) *strategic skills* that institutional entrepreneurs apply to take the right step at the right time.

Analytical Skills	Emphatic Skills	Strategic Skills
A good conception of the world (Fligstein, 1997)	The ability to motivate cooperation among different actors (building consensus) (Arpin et al., 2016; Fligstein, 2001)	The ability to maintain ambiguity (keep preferences hidden) (Fligstein, 1997)
A good sense for legitimate actions (Fligstein, 1997)	The ability to set the agenda (Fligstein, 2001)	The ability to apply multiple strategies at the same time (Fligstein, 1997)
Understand ambiguities and uncertainties of the organizational field (Fligstein, 2001)	The ability to produce meaning for others (Fligstein, 2001; Garud et al., 2007)	The ability to make others think that they are in control (Fligstein, 1997)
A good capacity to imagine alternative actions (Garud et al., 2007)	The ability of theorization / framing (Hwang & Powell, 2005; Perkmann & Spicer, 2007)	The ability to shake up a settled situation (Fligstein, 1997)
The ability to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment (Garud et al., 2007)	The ability to translate languages and symbols among actors (Garud et al., 2007; Zilber, 2006)	The ability to assign blame to others (Perkmann & Spicer, 2007; Garud et al., 2007)
The ability to diagnose causes for current situations / problems (Garud et al., 2007)	The ability to understand the conception of other actors (Boxenbaum & Straandgard Pedersen, 2009; Fligstein, 2001)	The ability to make alliances with people who have few other choices (Fligstein, 2001)

Table 1: Skills of institutional entrepreneurs.

Although these findings on institutional entrepreneurs' skills provide further insights about the emergence of institutional entrepreneurship, some questions remain unanswered. In particular, it is unclear which individuals possess these skills or why certain individuals possess these skills while others do not.

Fligstein (2001) answers that some people are naturally more skilful than others (p. 112). In other words, he suggests that institutional entrepreneurship can be explained by the diversity of human beings. However, taking a social science perspective – in particular a Durkheim's (1895) approach – it is an unsatisfying answer, because the discipline assumes sameness of human beings. Hence, the source of these social skills should be detected in order to tackle the paradox of the embedded agency.

Paradox of the Embedded Agency:

Since its existence, the concept of institutional entrepreneurship has been criticized on a number of occasions (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 19). The main critique concerns the unequal conceptions of humans, which coincides with the introduction of the new concept: To some

humans are attributed heroic values that others miss (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 177). This in turn leads to a disunity of the research programme. As a consequence, political scientists have even started to talk about a *new new* institutionalism, which they name “discursive institutionalism” (Schmidt, 2010). In fact, also organizational new institutionalism can be divided into two divergent research streams, which can be labelled as *classical* and *modern streams* (see figure 2).

On the one hand exists a *classical stream*, in which individuals are considered as dependent variables on institutions. For instance, mainly older contributions by Meyer and Rowan (1977), by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) or by Zucker (1977) pertain to the classical stream. In their studies, they take individuals as passive actors and try to understand how field institutions affect the behaviour of organizations and their individuals in it. Hence, classical stream studies are based on an image of human beings that comes close to the concept of homo sociologicus: actions and behaviour of homi sociologici - as Dahrendorf (1964) explains - are dictated by social norms and values.

On the other hand has evolved a modern stream within new institutionalism, in which individuals are considered as independent variables and institutions as the dependent ones. Christiansen and Lounsbury's (2013) work belongs, inter alia, to this stream: They demonstrate how so-called bricoleurs "creatively combine elements from different logics into newly designed artifacts" (p. 199), which is a first step towards institutional change. Such mainly newer studies take as a starting point an image of human nature, which fits well with the concept of homo oeconomicus: Similar as institutional entrepreneurs are described, homi oeconomici are said to possess predetermined preferences, which explain their mainly self-interested behaviour (Kirchgässner, 2008).

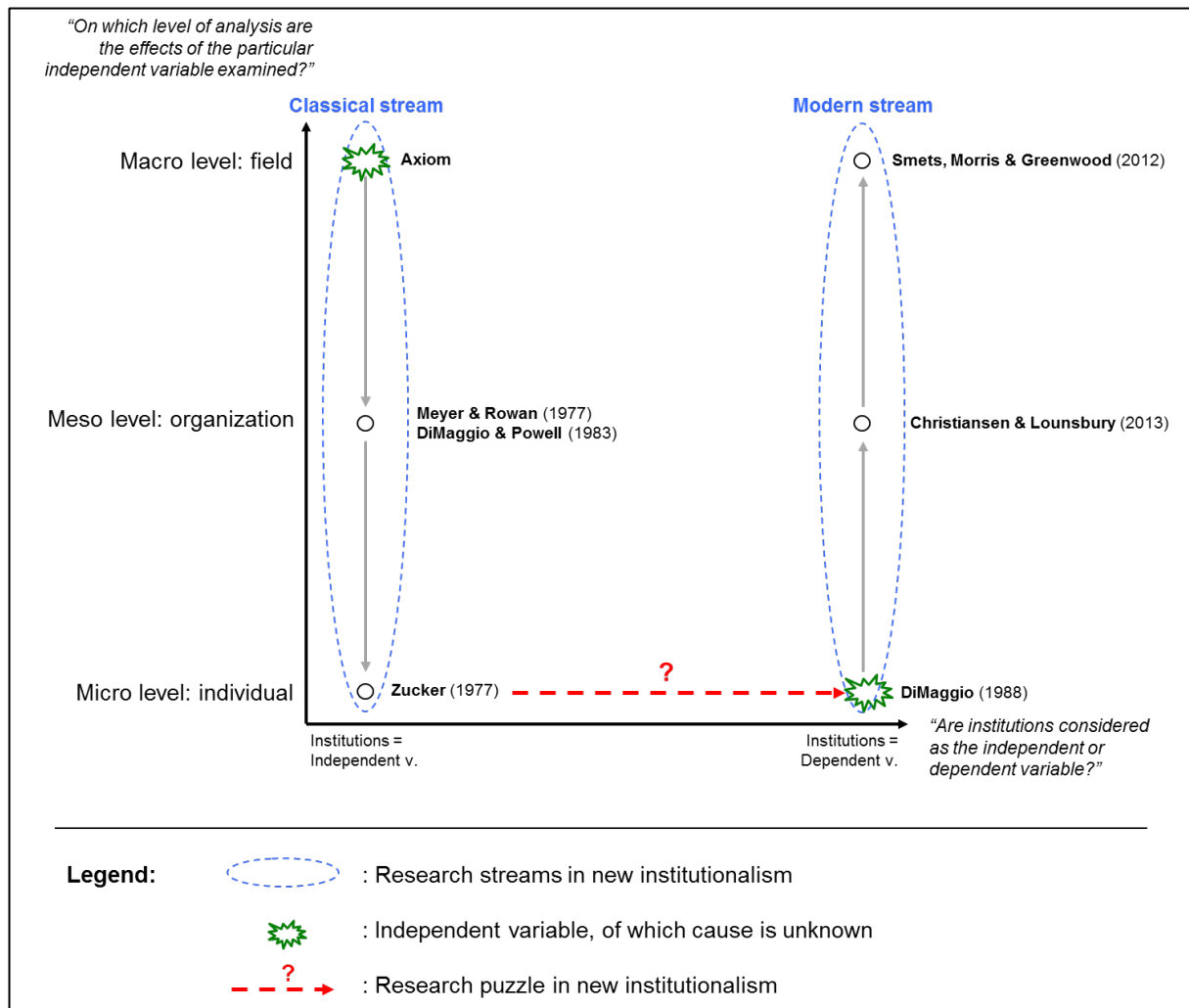


Figure 2: The Paradox of the Embedded Agency in New Institutionalism.

Having these two research streams coexisting in juxtaposition, it leads to a disunity of the new institutional research programme. For this reason, scholars have to give either more credibility to one of these two research streams or they need to find a way to conflate them. Choosing the second strategy engenders the aim of answering the well-known puzzle in new institutionalism, which is commonly referred to as the paradox of the embedded agency (Battilana & D'Aunno, 2009).

On this basis, the essential question to be answered in order to link the two research streams is the following one: What does the process resembles that traces the development of a passive actor (which is directed by prevalent institutions) towards an active entrepreneur (which creates new institutions)? In other words: How can a "cultural dope" become a "heroic entrepreneur"? Referring to the above discussion on institutional entrepreneurs' skills, the

question at hand can be refined: What resembles the acquisition process of social skills that are applied by institutional entrepreneurs while initiating institutional change?

In the next chapter, I try to explain that this process can be well portrayed when depicting it as an individual reflective learning process. To adopt this transformation as a learning process, it provides answers to the observed human differences in new institutionalism: They can consequently be explained by the fact that some individuals underwent successfully a learning process that others did not.

It should be mentioned previously, however, that the adoption of a learning process to tackle the paradox of the embedded agency, results likewise in the need of applying another human conception: Neither *homo sociologicus* nor *homo oeconomicus* seem to support the perception of an individual that is able to escape from prevailing rules and norms in order to redefine new institutions within existing ones.

Bronk's (2009) developed human conception though – *homo romanticus* – might address this gap. The concept comprehends humans as being able to create future images of themselves or of future ideas (such as products, services, party programmes etc.), which they believe as worthwhile to strive for. When trying to make vague imaginations to become reality, humans - as he argues - behave only partly rational or social. They behave rational or social as far as it supports them in approaching their targets. From this perspective therefore, humans' power of imagination and creativity can be the actual reason for ones individual will to learn new skills in order to change her or his environment.

Reflexive Management Learning in the Context of Institutional Entrepreneurship:

The literature on Reflexive Management Learning (RML) is a good starting point to conceptualize a learning process that traces the acquisition of institutional entrepreneurs' skills. First, because the concepts of reflection / reflexion provide plausible answers to the cause of learning practices; second, the literature on RML provides good indications for the characteristics of this learning process.

It is not a new approach to connect the concepts of reflection and institutional entrepreneurship: (i) the possession of reflective skills by institutional entrepreneurs has been

discussed yet (see for instance Beckert, 1999 or Mutch, 2007); (ii) the cause of individual reflection by specific field characteristics has also been identified already (see for instance Seo and Creed, 2002 or Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). However, these studies have usually referred to the concept of reflection without further defining it as a process. Hence, an in-depth-analysis of a reflective process in the context of institutional entrepreneurship seems still underdeveloped.

Reflection is defined as "a process in which we distance ourselves from an event in order to make sense of it, providing a conscious and thoughtful connection between ideas and experience, past experience and future action" (Lindeman, 1935; Vince & Reynolds, 2009, p. 90). Reflection is further an individual engagement "to explore [ones] experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations" (Boud et al., 1985, p. 19). In addition, "reflexive practice embraces subjective understandings of reality as a basis for thinking more critically about the impact of our assumptions, values, and actions on others (Cunliffe, 2004, p. 407).

These initial definitions indicate that reflection or reflexion can be the roots for unconventional behaviour, which might enable institutional entrepreneurship. This gives rise to the question of what exactly causes reflection within an institutionalized environment?

The physical term of reflection can provide relevant clues to this question: In physics, reflection is defined as "the change in direction of a wave front at an interface between two dissimilar media so that the wave front returns into the medium from which it originated (New World Encyclopedia, 2008). Transmitting this definition into the context of institutional entrepreneurship, institutional logics – "socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules" (Thornton, 2004, p. 69) – are therefore waves, which are reflected on another medium. An individual from another institutional field could then be such an opposite medium.

These considerations comply with several studies in new institutionalism: It conforms to Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum's (2009) model, which identifies, inter alia, heterogeneous field characteristics (hence institutional pluralism) as enabling factor of institutional entrepreneurship. This, because "individuals encounter contradictory institutional practices", which implies practical "adaptations that facilitate task accomplishment, and reconstruct their

underlying institutional logics” (Smets & Jarzabkowski, 2012, p. 1280). Institutional pluralism, in addition, fosters leadership and therefore skilful actors who are able to “knit” a pluralistic organization together (Kraatz & Block, 2008, p. 263).

On this basis, the following hypothesis is built: If an individual from a specific institutional field – consisting of a corresponding institutional logic – faces institutional pluralism, she or he starts a reflective learning process. This could occur, because habitually applied practices within an institutional field might provoke resistance by individuals from another logic background.

Having an idea about the cause of reflection, the second question evolves: What resembles a reflective learning process, which traces the acquisition of institutional entrepreneurs' skills?

Most literature on RML refers to one of the concept's founding fathers (Cotter & Cullen, 2012). These are: (i) John Dewey (1910), who considers learning as reflection on experiences; (ii) Paolo Freire (1973), who emphasizes that reflection requires a mental distance from the “material reality”; (iii) Donald A. Schön (1983), who focuses on so-called reflective practitioners and their reflection during procedures, which he denotes as reflection-in-action (in contrast to Dewey, who underlines reflection on past events).

This paper builds on Schön's (1983) concept about reflection-in-action, as the interest is in identifying individuals' reflections during situations such as institutional pluralism. For this reason, I describe Schön's (1983) contribution in further depth hereinafter.

Reflection-in-Action by Donald A. Schön (1983):

When studying Schön's (1983) “Reflective Practitioner”, many similarities with new institutionalism's main assumptions become apparent:

First, while new institutionalism asserts that an individual's behaviour is in accordance with field institutions, Schön (1983) mentions “technical rationalities” as guideline for individual actions. Each research discipline consists of a different “technical rationality”, as he argues. Organizational arrangements assure their preservation and reproduction (ibid., pp. 326).

Second, whereas practices correspond to field institutions, “theories” coincide with technical rationalities (ibid., p. 40). Each technical rationality is based on certain theories, which allow solving typical problems in the corresponding research disciplines. These problems are “schoolbook” problems, because they are modified in order to be solved by applying the essential theories.

However, real-world problems are more complex than “schoolbook” problems, as Schön (1983) explains (p. 44). Hence, an unreflective adoption of scientific theories is unsuitable. He proceeds and mentions that reflective practitioners are able to solve problems beyond their technical rationality. By a so-called reflection-in-action process, reflective practitioners find new workable solutions for challenging situations.

By observing reflective practitioners during their work, Schön (1983) develops the following four steps of a reflection-in-action process (pp. 307):

- 1) *Problem framing*: Because real-world problems are complex, a reflective practitioner needs to understand its distinction from “schoolbook” problems. As a consequence, problems have to be framed, before being solved. Schön (1983) defines this step as “problem setting”. Hence, in a reflection-in-action process, a reflective practitioner identifies a challengeable situation as an unprecedented problem.
- 2) *Analysing repertoire-knowledge*: In a reflection-in-action process, a reflective practitioner analyses similar past situations critically. The focus of the analysis is to revision the measures of the acting person. Such a “historical revisionism” can assist the reflective practitioner in understanding a current situation from a different angle. This enables her or him to identify new potential solutions to tackle a current situation.
- 3) *Considering fundamental methods of inquiry and overarching theories*: A reflective practitioner applies seemingly unsuitable or unfitting theories on a challenging situation. By interpreting a situation from the perspective of a different theory, she or he can enhance a reflection-in-action process. In this way, a reflective practitioner can discover new workable measures to solve a challenging situation.

- 4) *Analysing the process of reflection-in-action*: A reflective practitioner continuously reflects about applied actions during a challenging situation. In particular, she or he analyses the “tacit knowledge”: knowledge that is adopted unconsciously. A reflective practitioner can enhance this process by experimenting on the current situation. In this way, she or he can gather valid information and observable data about the current situation.

Reflection-in-Action in the Context of Institutional Pluralism:

Following the previous thoughts, I assume that an institutional entrepreneur is a reflective practitioner, who underwent a reflection-in-action process. Hence, I presume that an institutional entrepreneur was confronted with a challenging situation, which initiated the search for workable solutions beyond her or his institutional logic. From this, she or he acquired social skills to introduce institutional change through a reflection-in-action process.

Further, a challenging situation that initiates a reflection-in-action process is institutional pluralism: actions that are unproblematically applied within a single-logic environment can cause resistance when being confronted with individuals of other logic backgrounds. Hence, institutional pluralism can be an individual's mirror that initiates a reflection-in-action process.

To summarize, I assume that a reflection-in-action process can therefore explain the outcome of institutional entrepreneurs' skills. This reflective learning process is caused by institutional pluralism. However, not every individual who is confronted with institutional pluralism might automatically acquire institutional entrepreneurs' skills. It depends if an individual underwent a reflection-in-action process successfully.

The following model (see figure 3) illustrates these hypotheses:

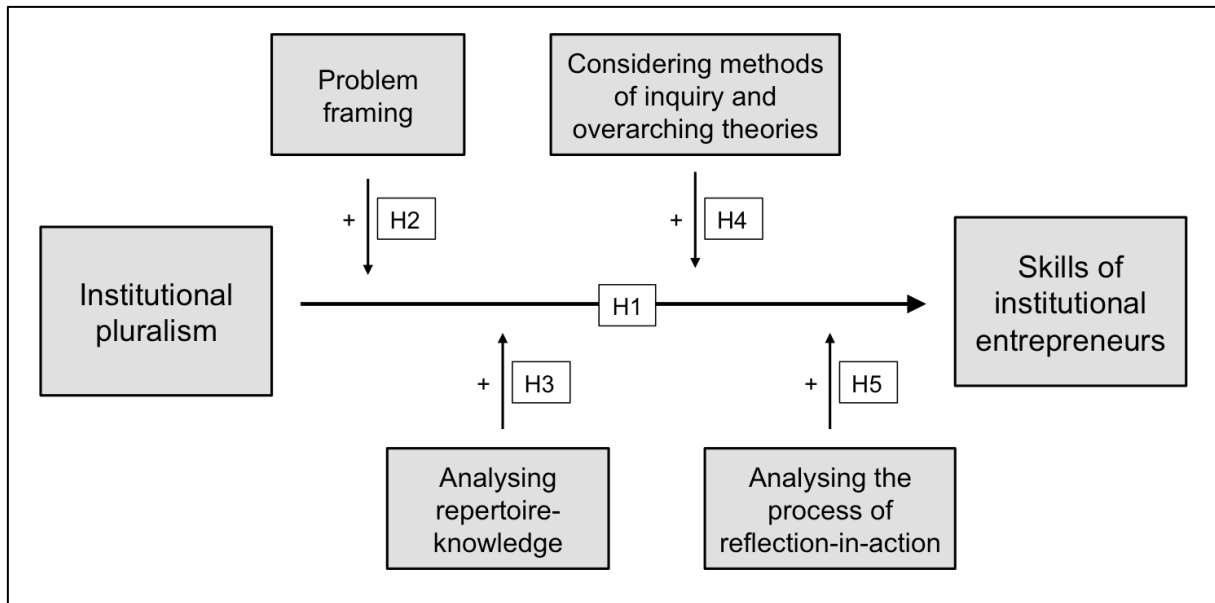


Figure 3: Reflection-in-action in the Context of Institutional Entrepreneurship.

From this model, I deduce the subsequent five hypotheses:

- H1: *Institutional pluralism can initiate a reflection-in-action process, which can enable an individual to acquire institutional entrepreneurs' skills.*
- H2: *If an individual identifies institutional pluralism as a challenging situation and distinct to ordinary problems, she or he starts to frame this situation as a new problem, this is why she or he develops new skills in order to find workable solutions for this new problem.*
- H3: *If an individual critically analyses taken actions in past situations of institutional pluralism, she or he gains new insights, which support her or him in developing new skills in order to handle a situation like institutional pluralism.*
- H4: *If an individual applies theories from divergent contexts on a situation of institutional pluralism, she or he gains different perspectives, which support her or him in developing new skills in order to handle a situation like institutional pluralism.*
- H5: *If an individual makes experiments on a situation such as institutional pluralism, she or he receives feedback in form of valid information and observable data, which*

support her or him in refining ones skills in order to handle a situation of institutional pluralism.

Case Description – Spatial Planning in Switzerland:

When trying to conceptualize a micro-level reflection-in-action process in the context of institutional pluralism, which might induces institutional entrepreneurs' skills, it seems useful to observe individuals, who regularly interact with actors of other logic backgrounds. Spatial planners in Switzerland are research objects that perfectly satisfy this condition.

Spatial planning is in general a complex matter (De Roo, Hillier & Wezemaël, 2012). Especially in a small country with scarce land resources like Switzerland, this topic becomes even more challenging. Different stakeholders have diverse demands on this valuable resource (Gilgen, 2012): Companies demand land for production facilities, families or single-person households desire spacious housing areas, while Green Party politicians claim for the protection of green spaces. When making a land use plan, spatial planners need to include these diverse interests (Healey, 1998). In Switzerland, above all, this requirement needs to be fulfilled as the direct democratic tradition of the country allows affected organizations and even individuals to demand for the amendment of a land use plan (Swiss Law on Spatial Planning, Article 4). As a consequence, spatial planners have to be in interaction with different stakeholders in order to better serve their interests.

Although the interaction with a variety of different stakeholders is daily business for spatial planners, the dealing with persons of diverse backgrounds has to be learned on the job (Forester, 1999, Healey, 1992). For this reason, I consider them as an ideal case to study reflection-in-action processes in the context of institutional pluralism. Observing spatial planners in their work can therefore provide relevant insights about specific characteristics of such a process that might explain the origin of institutional entrepreneurs' skills.

On this basis, I have started to observe a Swiss spatial planner from a middle-sized town. I have started to attend a monthly meeting committee, which is managed by the spatial planner. The other members of the committee are head officials from different administrative units of the same public authority. They represent diverse responsibilities and come therefore from diverse backgrounds such as mobility, energy, economic promotion or social issues. The aim

of the committee is to develop a spatial strategy for the corresponding town in order to achieve commonly agreed visions for the year 2040. The committee is a good example of an institutional pluralistic situation and can therefore provide relevant insights about the reflection-in-action processes of the involved stakeholders.

To put it in perspective, it should be added that from the collected data can be deduced preliminary findings so far. It will be necessary to conduct further interviews with other spatial planners in order to better test and refine the above mentioned hypotheses on institutional entrepreneurs' skills. Nevertheless, these preliminary findings can give first indications about the characteristics of a reflection-in-action process in the context of institutional pluralism. They are presented in the next chapter.

Preliminary Findings:

The gathered data, which consist of initial observations on the committee and of accompanied interviews with the committee members, deliver confirming results for the following hypotheses: *H2: Problem framing*, *H3: Analysing repertoire-knowledge*, and *H5: Analysing the process of reflection-in-action*. These insights are described hereinafter.

H2: Problem framing:

It could be observed that the involved spatial planner underwent a phase that has been defined earlier in this paper as *problem framing*. The spatial planner mentioned in an interview that it took the committee members almost three months to understand each other. He elaborated that different opinions about the content and purpose of a spatial plan had existed among the members. He framed this observed problem by saying that each member "speaks a different language". Based on this awareness, he realized that the intended procedure would need adjustment.

H3: Analysing repertoire-knowledge:

Once the spatial planner had realized that each member "speaks a different language", the situation reminded him on his vocational studies. Before becoming formed in spatial planning, the observed spatial planner had studied industrial engineering and underwent a formation as draughtsman. He explained that during his different studies, he had realized how people "wear different heads" as a result of their professional backgrounds. From these experiences, he had

learned to carefully listen to other people in order to deal with such situations. Due to this recollection, he applied this same strategy during the first meetings.

H5: Analysing the process of reflection-in-action:

Since the spatial planner realized that it is important to carefully listen in order to understand the logics of the involved members, he started experimenting on the situation. He organized a first workshop in which a strategy was jointly formulated. Based on this text, he organized a second workshop, in which the involved members started to draw their visions of the towns' future on giant maps. These drawings were then used to draft a first spatial plan, which illustrated the urban development for the next decades. The plan was hereupon presented to the committee members once again in order to receive further feedbacks. At the moment, the draft is in revision again.

Through this sort of “ping-pong” procedure, the spatial planner can experiment on the situation and therefore receive more information about the members' interests and their perceptions. This gathering of information might support his development of empathic skills.

Conclusion:

In this paper, I have argued that institutional entrepreneurs' existence needs to be explained by examining the acquisition of their skills. I have categorized these social skills as *analytical*, *empirical* and *strategic skills*. Based on this, I have assumed that this acquisition process shall be understood as an individual learning process: In this way, it is possible to conflate the two divergent research streams of new institutionalism (*classical* and *modern stream*). Institutional entrepreneurs can then be understood as individuals who successfully underwent a learning process.

I have presumed that a reflection-in-action process as described by Donald A. Schön is a good departure point to depict this learning process: First, because reflection can be caused by an institutional pluralistic situation; second, Schön's findings provide good indications of this process' characteristics. Based on the concept of reflection-in-action, I have developed a model, in which the process from institutional pluralism to the acquisition of institutional entrepreneurs' skill is illustrated. From this model, I have developed five hypotheses, which I have analysed on a Swiss spatial planning case – corresponding an institutional pluralistic situation.

The gathered data implies that institutional pluralism can initiate a reflection-in-action process by the involved actors. So far, it could be observed that the involved actors undergo phases that have defined earlier in this paper as *problem framing (H2)*, *analysing repertoire-knowledge (H3)* and *analysing the process of reflection-in-action (H5)*. However, the data refers exclusively to one case. Hence, they do not imply general validity and cannot demonstrate – at this stage of the investigation – if the observed process leads to the acquisition of institutional entrepreneurs' skills. As a consequence, further studies on other spatial planners are needed in order to refine and test the developed hypotheses on the cause of institutional entrepreneurs' skills.

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