

# The Recursive Nature of Institutional Change: An Annales School Perspective

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## Abstract

In this essay, we propose a recursive model of institutional change building on the Annales School, one of the 20th century's most influential streams of historical research. Our model builds upon three concepts from the Annales—mentalities, levels of time, and critical events—to explore how punctual disruptions affect different dimensions of institutional logics and exert short- or long-range influences. On these bases, organizations make choices, from decoupling to more radical shifts in logics, leading to severe institutional changes that become a matter of history. As much as organizations are influenced by their times and the prevalent institutional logics, their choices trigger macro-level changes in a recursive manner. More broadly, we comment on how fruitful it our approach to historicize organization studies.

**Keywords:** Annales School; Institutional change; Institutional Logics; Events.

## Introduction

This essay encourages organizational scholars to trespass the borders of their fields of inquiry by embracing the structural and more slowly changing historical components that constitute the matter of past and contemporary epochs. Despite calls to incorporate history into organization studies (Clark & Rowlinson, 2004; Kieser, 1994; Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014), concepts and frameworks imported from the field of history are few, and thorny issues remain about what role history should have in organizational studies (Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014; O'Sullivan & Graham, 2010), how to reconcile the two disciplines conceptually (Diaz-Bone, 2014; Rowlinson, Hassard, & Decker, 2013), and how to enhance their integration (Greenwood & Bernardi, 2013). The first hindrance is that organizational studies often do not specify a historical period, rather arbitrarily they divide time into successive stages with no attention to duration or transition phases (Kieser, 1994). Second, most studies use a process of downward causation in which broad historical contexts influence organizational and individual occurrences (Isaac & Griffin, 1989) but ignore upward processes in which events condition organizations' decisions, which in turn shape history.

Recent works in institutional theory strive to address these issues but in an unsatisfactory way. Institutional logics connect the macro-historical components of a society to the context of decision-making and practice adoption (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Hence, using a logics lens implies identifying shared values and beliefs and looking at the way these values and beliefs build over time and influence organizational and individual behaviors (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012). The logics literature acknowledges historical contingencies in these processes, but it draws less attention to the variance in their time range and the temporality of their influence (Ocasio, Mauskopf & Steele, 2015). Thus, within the logics perspective, the understanding of the

historical dimension of institutional change is still limited (Campbell, 2004; Wright & Zammuto, 2013). Recent efforts to connect neo-institutionalism with history fall short on this account: neo-institutionalism is oblivious of its old roots in history and sociology (Hirsch & Lounsbury, 1997), and its preferred level of analysis (organizations within fields or industries) prevents researchers from embracing longer-term influences, different temporal conditions, and recursive processes between practices, organizations, and historical matter.

In an effort to retie the threads that disciplinary specialization has pulled apart, and to evade the shyness of organization studies vis-à-vis one of its mother disciplines, we evoke the Annales School, one of the most influential approaches to history from the 20th century, and we build bridges with recent institutional and organizational research. Since the 1930s, the Annales School has revolutionized the study of history, leaving a lasting impact on our understanding and interpretation of the past (Burguière, 2009; Burke, 1990; Forster, 1978). The Annalists strove to fuse history, sociology, and traditional narrative methods with more analytical and quantitative evidence (Patriotta, 2004). Organizational scholars have referred to different authors of the Annales School (Greenwood & Bernardi, 2013), but they have not systematically integrated the insights of the Annales School into organizational studies and, more specifically, into institutional theory. Three essential components of the Annales School shed light on the core elements of institutional literature: 1) mentalities (Bloch, 1990; Febvre, 1985), which relate to prevailing values, beliefs, and norms in an organizational field permeated by various institutional logics; 2) levels of time (Braudel, 1995), which differ in their range of influence for different dimensions of institutional logics; and 3) critical events (Braudel, 1995; Labrousse, 1990; Le Roy Ladurie, 1971), which trigger mechanisms that disrupt the dimensions of constitutive logics.

In his fundamental opus *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Braudel (1995) distinguishes slow-moving elements, such as structure, from mid-

range moving elements, the conjectures, and culminating in punctual occurrences—the events. Therefore, he recognized a downward causal chain of influence from structure to events. However, events not only stem from historical patterns but also help us reveal, understand, and change them (Tendler, 2013). After the publication of his main opus, a friend wrote a letter to Braudel asking whether he “could have written it the other way round—beginning with events, then moving on from that spectacular and often misleading pageant to the structural features underlying it, and finally to the bedrock of history” (Braudel, 1995, p. 903). Braudel approved and suggested that “[p]erhaps the metaphor of the hourglass, eternally reversible [between structure and events], is a fitting image for what I have left unsaid in this brief introduction” (Braudel, 1995, p. 903).

Following the hourglass analogy, we propose that critical event-driven mechanisms affect institutional logics and, depending on their temporal ranges of influence, trigger organizations’ decisions. Organizations instantiate changes by engaging in new sets of behaviors and practices (Smets et al., 2012), which cumulate in institutional change and, hence, provide a foundation for new events. There is a pattern of short- (events and actions) and long-term (logics and practices) elements that affect each other in an “eternally reversible” way. This study informs the institutional logics perspective and organizational studies more broadly in two different ways. It fleshes out the temporal nature of institutional logics’ components and the mechanisms by which historical events alter them. This advances the agenda of “historicizing institutional logics” (Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014; Soin & Huber, 2013), and connects multiple levels of time with a causal chain that links events to logics and organizational actions to institutional change, and ultimately to historical trends.

## **The Challenges of Historicizing Institutional Change**

Organizational theories—and the (neo)institutional theory is no exception—usually consider one historical context (e.g. liberalization, prohibition, shifts in political regimes) with an unclear time horizon. They ignore the possibility that different historical constituents evolve at different paces and thus exert varying influences on institutional dimensions (e.g., Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014). In addition, a majority of literature that uses history on organizational studies adopts a downward causation approach. The influence of macro-level historical factors cascades down to lower levels of analysis, including professions and organizations (Juusola, Kettunen, & Alajoutsijärvi, 2015; Padgett & Powell, 2012; Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2003). However, the relationship between organizational events and longer historical trends flows both ways, each mutually affecting the other, which challenges causality identification (Chandler, 1992; Soin & Huber, 2013; Stinchcombe, 2005). As pointed out by Sheingate (2014), institutions rely on the relative speed of distinct social processes for their durability and dynamism. Organizations make institutional choices, espousing or contradicting historical trends, leading (or not) to significant institutional change, and setting the stage for new events and crises (Djelic, 1998; Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Juusola et al., 2015; Schüssler, Ruling, & Wittneben, 2013). We provide further examination of these processes and explore how the Annales School enlightens us about them.

### **History and Institutional Theory**

During their early development, history and institutional research were in synchrony. Sociologists of institutions (Durkheim and Weber, to cite only two fathers of the discipline) used historical examples to defend their theses. However, in the 1950s, the two fields started to diverge on epistemological and methodological grounds (Clark & Rowlinson, 2004; Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014). By the late 1980s, organizational scholars and neo-institutionalists expressed concerns

regarding the lack of historical relevance in their research. Zucker (1989) stressed that historical time matters for understanding institutional shifts, and that legitimacy of organizational forms could not be taken exogenously from their historical context. Isaac and Griffin (1989), Zald (1993), Kieser (1994), and others also emphasized the importance of positioning organizational and institutional phenomena in a historical context and perspective, of not approaching history in a purely instrumental fashion and historical causality in a downward mode.

This downward causation is still at play in institutional theory, in what Hirsch and Lounsbury (1997) called the structuralist turn of neo-institutionalism, which is geared toward field persistence and isomorphism among organizations (Cloutier & Langley, 2013; Meyer & Höllerer, 2014). However, building on Barley's seminal paper (1986) suggesting that structures emerge from actions, Barley and Tolbert (1997) combined institutional and structuration theories to present a model about the interplay between institutions and actions. Recent studies of political science, too, have investigated the role of micro-level actions on the durability of political institutions, building on the early assumptions of institutional theory that stability and change succeed each other (Sheingate, 2014). Within institutional theory research, the institutional logics perspective has also contributed to the theorizing of institutional change, by integrating historical economic trends with their conceptual apparatus (Ocasio et al., 2015; Rao et al., 2003; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

### **The Historical Dimension of Institutional Logics**

Before Friedland and Alford (1991) first proposed the concept of institutional logic, few studies included related notions, such as logics of actions or economies of worth (Boltanski & Thevenot, 1991; Cloutier & Langley, 2013; Diaz-Bone, 2014; Fligstein, 1987, 1993). Since then, many scholars contributed to this stream of research that defines institutional logics as the system of

values, beliefs, and assumptions that drive behaviors of groups of actors (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008; Thornton et al., 2012). One of the main insights shared by Friedland and Alford (1991) and Thornton et al. (2012) is the conception of society as an inter-institutional system. Thornton et al. (2012) further elaborated the original idea of Friedland and Alford (1991) and proposed seven ideal-typical institutional logics, each related to an institutional order: family, community, religion, state, market, profession, and corporation.

The institutional logics perspective accommodates change and history in its analysis (Thornton et al., 2012). Several works have explored how institutional logics changed throughout different historical periods (Thornton et al., 2012). In the publishing industry, Thornton and Ocasio (1999) showed that among top executives, turnover and power depends on both the historical period and institutional logics in play. Rao, Monin, and Durand (2005) deconstructed the sociological and identity factors underlying a French chef's progression from craftsman to artist, which has created a new era for gastronomy economics. Soin and Huber (2013) explained how the UK financial regulation is the result of a long-term sedimentation of logics. Juusola et al. (2015) demonstrated that the competition of multiple logics creates long term organizational patterns and models. Historical contingency is one of the five key principles of this perspective (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). However, most studies still treat institutional logics and history as independent variables (Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014; Thornton et al., 2012) in order to explain institutional change and organizational outcomes, such as status or reputation change (Rao et al., 2003), executive recruitment (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999), or practice adoption (Lounsbury, 2007).

Most studies have focused on a downward influence of logics and history, examining how broadly based logics shape organizational fields and behaviors (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006; Thornton et al., 2012) and explaining the diffusion of market logics into diverse fields (Rhinean

capitalism, Fiss & Zajac, 2004; Russian agency post-communism, Tilcsik, 2010; the cultural exception of French cinema, Durand & Jourdan, 2012). Other works have studied upward movements, such as how organizations change field logics through rhetoric, narratives, and boundary practices (Garud, Jain, & Kumaraswamy, 2002; Hoffman & Ocasio, 2001; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). Only recently have scholars studied institutional logics in order to comprehend what influences the constitutive dimensions of the logics in time, and to explain organizations' decisions both to instantiate certain logics and to deploy institutional changes at the field level over a longer period of time (Ocasio et al., 2015).

### **Temporality of Logics and the Recursive Nature of Institutional Change**

The institutional logics perspective acknowledges historical contingencies but it does not explore the deep and varied nature of the duration of historical constituents, nor does it fully theorize the role and importance of events in reshaping longer-term trends. As a result, institutional logics are situated in specific historical contexts, but their duration and temporal range of influence remain unexplained, which conflicts with empirical observations that some institutional logics are more stable than others (Soin & Huber, 2013). This gap, in turn, generates issues in the understanding and theorization of institutional change and in how organizations participate in such change (see Dacin et al., 2002). For example, why do state-based logics tend to be inherently stable (Tilcsik, 2010) while others change more quickly, such as the logic of care in the health sector (Dunn & Jones, 2010; Nigam & Ocasio, 2010)?

Few studies have attempted to understand the recursive nature of institutional change: Barley and Tolbert (1997) exposed a recursive model of institutional formation by theorizing a two-way relationship between the “realm of actions” and the “realm of institutions,” although they do not consider the temporality aspects. Scott et al. (2000) analyzed the antecedents of long-

term institutional change in healthcare. Building on Sewell (1996), Thornton and Ocasio (2008) recognized event sequencing as the “temporal and sequential unfolding of unique events that dislocate, rearticulate, and transform the interpretation and meaning of cultural symbols and social economic structures” (p. 116). Critical events, such as crises or scandals, usually go beyond transformed interpretations, actually prompting changes in the prevailing logics of a given field. Yet, in institutional logics and more broadly in institutional change research, downward causation still prevails, and mechanisms that change institutional logics and possibly upend inter-institutional orders still need to be fully understood.<sup>1</sup>

In their study of English County cricket, Wright and Zammuto (2013) show how organizations instantiate logics and how this in turn triggers institutional change at a macro level by influencing logics at the field and industry level. They point out the need for more research on the role of societal disruption in institutional change, as well as on the interaction between shocks and longer-lasting institutional influences, such as those identified in Campbell’s (2004) study of globalization. This emerging literature suggests the need to incorporate history into institutional logics. We offer a new pathway based on the Annales School approach to history, which bridges economics and sociology (Burke, 1990; Forster, 1978). This pathway can contribute to explaining how we can make sense of institutional change in history; critical events affect the specific dimensions of institutional logics, help unveil distinct temporal ranges of influence, and push organizations to enact institutional change, which in turn feeds the sequences of actions grouped in the coherent narrative that we call history.

### **The Annales School: Concepts and Contribution**

There is an important untapped potential in the concepts designed by historians that can lend to a better understanding of sociological and institutional evolution (Booth & Rowlinson, 2006); thus,

management and organizational scholars could have a lot to learn from historical theorists. The need to draw from historical theories is also motivated by the increasingly historiographical nature of organizational research (Rowlinson et al., 2013): because organizations exist in a long-term context, concepts from historical theories offer a complementary set of tool for organizational scholars, especially when they are looking at slow-changing elements like institutions. While the work of historians is “about sense making rather than tracing back patterns and regularities” (Patriotta, 2004, p. 5), organizational scholars need a more analytical approach to identify regularities and build up causal propositions. Because the Annales School integrated contributions from both history and sociology, it reconciled those two perspectives and offered conceptual tools to bridge this gap (Patriotta, 2004).

A rigorous approach to history means going beyond the mere recording of facts or the temptation to present overly flattering perspectives of heroes in their eras (Breisach, 2007). When the Annales School emerged, it was motivated to avoid heroic accounts, to improve causality in history (Bloch, 1990; Sewell, 1967), and to raise history to the level of science (Burguière, 1979). Annalists strove to understand causality by radically revising the conception of time (Burguière, 2009; Hall, 1980) and focusing on the behavior of the social masses (Le Goff, 1996). Some historians criticized the sociologists’ idea of examining structural relationships at a single point in time, what Althusser calls “*coupe d’essence*” (essential section), or synchronic approach to time (Hall, 1980). The Annales School was the first school of thought in history to identify the relativity of time (Hall, 1980), to escape the linearity of historical time (Braudel, 1970), and to embrace several time frames not only across but also within civilizations and societies (Iggers, 2005). In this sense, the Annales School offers an untapped potential to flesh out the temporality of institutional logics and the recursive nature of institutional change.

## **A Brief History of the Annales School**

As Clark (1999) notes, “nobody has rivaled the collective impact of the [...] historians associated with the French academic journal *Annales*<sup>2</sup> and its twentieth-century campaign to alter fundamentally our understanding of the past” (p. xi). In a movement that lasted for 70 years and included many crucial and influential figures, talking about a single Annales “school” does not do the movement justice (Burguière, 1979, 2009). Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre started the Annales School and founded its journal, *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, in 1929. The Annales echoed Durkheim’s vision for sociology, expressed in the first editorial of *l’Année Sociologique*. Durkheim wrote that he wanted to embrace phenomena holistically and to compare and apply evidence to facts and trends: “History can only be a science if it explains and it can only explain if it compares. As soon as it compares, [history] is like sociology” (Burguière, 1979: 1352). The Annales strove both to focus on the scientific nature of history and on understanding social interactions. This analytical stance, with which we are familiar in management theory, was a rare thing in historical research, and as such the Annalists reconciled historians’ penchant for narrative analysis with an appetite for causal explanations (Patriotta, 2004).

The second wave of Annales School historians came after World War II with Fernand Braudel, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, and Ernest Labrousse. They all focused on economic history (Burguière, 2009) in order to better understand the history of the masses (Le Goff, 1996). Braudel examined *longue durée*, the long-lasting trends of history, rather than narratives about epiphenomena, which divide rather than unite the social sciences (Braudel, 1970). The Annales’ approach acknowledges also a *subjectivist* approach to time, in which time becomes a variable in studying groups and individuals historically (Gurvitch, 1957). However, it opposed the idea of considering time solely from an individual’s perception (Hall, 1980). Braudel acknowledged the coexistence of subjective and objective notions of time (Braudel, 1970). We posit here that some

of the concepts of the Annales School allow us to comprehend the complex relationships between time and institutional change.

### **Three Crucial Components of the Annales School**

Despite different voices within the Annales School (Burguière, 1979), a number of critical themes characterize this movement. Initially, the Annales School sought to understand any forms of historical phenomena, including quiet periods that seemed of less interest at first glance, and not just transitory manifestations of power, revolution, or military feats. This new approach uncovered profound causes leading to events (Braudel, 1995), rebalanced attention on the masses (Le Goff, 1996), and renewed a focus on the importance of social interactions. Advocates of the school propose a *total* history, wherein events are important only in relation to their socio-economic contexts. Total history relies on a comprehensive examination of the past, focused not only on celebrities and outstanding social actors but also on the masses and mental contingencies (Febvre, 1985; Thompson, 1963). In other terms, the Annales encompassed a broad range of antecedents and causes in order explain the unfolding of events. The Annales developed three fundamental concepts: mentalities (from the early work of Febvre [1985] and Bloch [1990]), multiple levels of time (Braudel, 1995), and critical events.

**Mentalities.** Bloch's doctoral dissertation in 1924 was inspired by the emergence of psychoanalysis and social psychology. Bloch (1990) shaped the concept of mentalities, which he derived from Durkheim's concept of the "collective conscience as the set of shared beliefs, ideas and moral attitudes which operate as a unifying force within society" (Burguiere, 1979; Tandler, 2013). Bloch (1990) studied phenomena that are difficult to grasp today, such as the belief that kings in the Middle Ages had magical powers. Unlike previous historians, Bloch had no interest in describing miraculous cures and/or determining whether a king was effective or not. Instead,

he questioned why people credited the king with such power. He provided an explanation for why people believed that a king could cure scrofula (tuberculosis) by simply touching them and for how this belief affected interactions between a king and his subjects. Bloch (1990) explained that “there are states of mind which were formerly common, yet which appear peculiar to us because we no longer share them” (p. 67).

In 1942, Febvre, the second founding father of the Annales School, followed a similar path. He deconstructed the idea that Rabelais was an atheist by pointing out that such a judgment stemmed from an ignorance of that period’s mentalities (Febvre, 1985). The mere possibility that believers and non-believers co-existed belongs to later periods in history, and applying such a notion *ex post*, he alleged, violates the historical logic and mentalities of that period. This leads to a variety of misunderstandings, some particularly anachronistic: Febvre reasoned, thus, that Rabelais was actually *inhabited* by the divine, and could not be considered anti-Christian because such thing was inconceivable and did not exist at that time.

Bloch and Febvre’s studies led to a new form of history: a history of mentalities, or the attitudes, values, and beliefs of social groups (Hutton, 1981; Le Goff, 1996).<sup>3</sup> Mentalities are formally defined as “what is distinctive about the thought process and the set of beliefs of groups and societies” (Lloyd, 1990, p. 1). They help explain and compare trajectories of societies (Sewell, 1967). In the past, mentalities were often ignored, and scholars relied on current, but inappropriate, contingencies that led to erroneous interpretations of history (Burguière, 2009). Mentalities pertain to a history of “common thoughts, ideas having become a commonplace [...] and ideological reflexes” (Le Goff & Schmidt, 1996: 15).

Mentalities differ from the concept of collective rationality, a principle of action that influences individuals on the basis of observing others’ actions (Finkel et al., 1989). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) also use the concept of collective rationality to designate institutional

prescriptions because of the mimetic coercion exercised by institutions (Scott, 2013). The mental contingencies identified in the Annales as mentalities are not necessarily built on rationality: they are rather an automatic way of thinking. In addition, while mentalities are beliefs that are collectively shared, their very existence paradoxically does not depend upon the fact they are shared. Medieval historians, for example, have looked at the religious mentality of millenarianism, the idea that the world would change through some radical transformation, such as an apocalypse. They examined how both the lowest class of the society and well-instructed individuals shared this mentality, despite belonging to different non-interacting groups (Le Goff & Schmidt, 1996). In this sense, while institutional logics are systems of rationality and norms shared between interacting actors within a bounded social space, the pervasion of mentalities does not require any social interface.

Later, Bloch used the concept of mentalities when advocating for a comparative approach to history (Bloch, 1953; Sewell, 1967). He argued that mentalities could explain different trajectories for apparently similar societies by invalidating explanations that make sense only within constrained geographical boundaries. By enlarging the scope of analyses, the study of mentalities explores how broader contexts affect micro-level behaviors. For example, the history of taxes is deeply affected by changing mindsets across populations and territories regarding money and time, and the history of religion is affected by a dying belief in the devil (Le Goff, 1996). Another example is the working class consciousness identified by Thompson (1963) in his fundamental work, *The Making of the English Working Class*. Thompson explained that whereas the working class was assumed to be a well-defined and anchored block in the society, in actuality it was built on an underlying mentality regarding the very existence of classes and economic stratification within the society.

**Braudel's levels of time.** Braudel believed that historians should focus on stratified and linear time rather than on time units. Mentalities belong to a given socio-economic context, change slowly, and form constitutive and structural layers, which accumulate and mix (Tendler, 2013). Braudel's objective treatment of time was primarily a question of different scales (Hall, 1980); historians often heed the "surface disturbances, crests of foams that the tides of history carry on their strong back" (Braudel, 1995: 21). To avoid comprehension errors, Braudel distinguished three levels of time, and thus established one of the best-known and important contributions of the Annales School.

In his 1949 opus, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Braudel (1995) delineated the *structure* that incorporates geographical and geological times, which affect history profoundly and change at the slowest pace. First, structure encompasses environmental elements, for which change is so slow that it is hard to observe during a human lifetime. Mentalities partake of this component inasmuch as they are deeply influenced by the natural environment. Second, the intermediate level, or *conjuncture*, involves mostly socio-economic fluctuations. Conjunctures include general trends of different kinds wherein human actions play a significant role, such as the Industrial Revolution. For example, the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States is characterized, at the structural level, by a slow shift from an economy of production to an economy of service (Prudhomme, 1965). Marzewski (1961) pointed out the periodical and recurrent nature of the conjuncture: economic cycles, growth, and depression are observed at the conjuncture level. Third, *events*, quick changes with limited duration, are the epiphenomena that occur in a short amount of time and are measured in months or years.

The perception that different factors have different levels of temporality opened a new and bountiful era of historical studies. Whereas in the Greco-Roman era, "history teaches through persuasive writing" and in the German era, "history is a scientific study of development" (Clark,

1999: xxxvii), in the era of the Annales School, history finally becomes a social science, with different levels of time (Stoianovich, 1976). “For history is not only a science of movement. [...] Now, at last, it struggles to penetrate beneath the mere surface of actions” (Bloch, 1990: 11). The concept of levels of time thus brought a fundamental change to the study of history: it started acknowledging the multiplicity and overlap of temporal contexts and, thus, the importance of historical trends along with events.

**Critical events.** The structural framework of human interactions tends to be relatively stable, but when it changes, it does so in significant bursts that produce “lumpiness, rather than smoothness [...] the normal texture of historical temporality” (Sewell, 1996, p. 153). From the Annales School perspective, critical events, such as crises, are “the privileged moment in a system’s operation when an event reveals the structure” (Burguière, 2009, p. 108). From Labroussian mechanics (Clough, 1947) to Le Roy Ladurie’s (1971) perspective, Annales School historians have tried to understand the mechanisms of economic crises, while Sewell (1996) investigated how historical events (like the taking of the Bastille) decisively affect social and political structures.

Annales School historians viewed events and crises positively. Events that affect the structures of an economic or political system help reveal its mechanics (Burguière, 2009). Critical events in the Annales School rely on a microhistorical approach; as such, they must be distinguished from incidents because they affect all levels of societies, including the masses (Weinstein, 2004). Labrousse (1990) explained the consequence of subsistence crises, which happen when food supplies run low because of bad harvests and human mistakes (Clough, 1947). Le Roy Ladurie (1971) presented the same phenomenon as excessive growth, creating anxiety, generating imbalances, and ultimately leading to social unrest. For Le Roy Ladurie, crises result from imbalances that affect mentalities which, in turn, affect institutions. Complementarily,

Labrousse (1990) focused on crises as a source of new equilibria (Burguière, 2009). Sewell (2005) argued that structure is amenable to change through events, citing how Captain Cook's sojourn in Hawaii profoundly transformed the contemporary social and historical structure of the island.

Because critical events expose underlying societal mechanisms, they can also trigger a trend of progressive questioning regarding the slower moving layer of history. Critical events reshape slow-changing systems (such as structure or conjecture), and they modify significance and reshape interactions, both spatially and temporally (Sewell, 1996) by revealing their anatomy (Burguière, 2009). The taking of the Bastille, for example, exposed weak political sovereignty and the erosion of the king's power. This event shed light on France's decaying Ancien Regime and served as the foundation of a new, enduring political order. Labrousse's (1990) and Le Roy Ladurie's (1971) concept that critical events articulate new equilibria resonates with Braudel's original idea of levels of time, for which events can also affect higher levels of time. Events stem from conflicts and contradictions in long-lasting structural components, as well as affecting them in return. This pattern of longer trends and punctuated occurrences results in perpetual swings between change and stability.

The Annales's concept of critical events differs from that of field-configuring events. Whereas the latter are localized at the field level, providing a nexus for members of a social space (such as an industry or a profession) to interact with each other (Lampel & Meyer, 2008), critical events have a broader impact because they take place at a more macro level. Some field-configuring events, however, can have consequences beyond their field and generate institutional change as pushed forward by the members of the field; as one example, the United Nations Conferences have had a significant impact on regulation and sustainability issues (Maguire & Hardy, 2010; Shussler et al., 2010). Thus, field-configuring events can become critical events

when their significance extends to the structure of the economic and political social systems (Ansari, Wijen, & Gray, 2013; Townley, 2002).

In sum, the Annales School aimed to capture deep structural causes, conjectures, and critical events with different temporalities, which affect how people think, live, and interact. Although critical events help expose and reveal underlying causes, they should not be the main focus of investigation. Events make sense only in relation to hidden, slow-moving socio-economic patterns, which must be interpreted in context in order to reveal underlying structures and mentalities. The Annales School historians stressed history *from below* or “long term changes in the material conditions of life, taking place largely below the level of human consciousness” (Castells, Caraça, & Cardozo, 2012, p. 34). As Febvre stressed in 1932, the Annales tradition focused on the masses rather than on outstanding social actors or celebrities. It emphasized long-lasting trends in order to enhance the intelligibility of social phenomena (Pilkington, 2013). The Annalists thought that looking at history from *below* is a way to adopt a critical stance on how mental contingencies contribute to oppression and exploitation in the more fragile strata of society (see, for example, the monography by British Marxist historian Thompson [1963] on the consciousness of a working class).

Braudel (1995) used the metaphor of the hourglass as “eternally reversible” (p. 493) to explain the two-way causation direction between structure and events; a slower-moving trend, the structure, exerts a downward causation on faster-moving trends, the conjunctures, and eventually on events, which have a punctual duration. Then, the hourglass flips and the events begin to influence slower-moving trends. The succession of this dual causal chain of influence—from structure to event and back—triggers a recursive movement, implying a multiplicity of critical events, conjunctural cycles, and the maintenance of the slow-moving structure.

The Annales School also strongly influenced sociologists. The concept of mentalities inspired Bourdieu's habitus (Burguiere, 2009), which is built upon the incarnation of the structure component of history and is, as such, extremely difficult to amend (Diepeveen-Jansen, 2001). Bourdieu (1977) also aligned with the concept of mentalities when reflecting on the contrast between the cognitive and motivating structure. By incorporating the concepts of the Annales School into the institutionalist approach, we perpetuate and revive the connection between history, sociology, and organization studies, thus stimulating a promising new area of research for scholars.

### **An Annales School Perspective on Institutional Change**

In this section, we look more closely at how insights from the Annales School pertain to the study of institutional change and organizational studies. The Annales School concepts and overall framework coincide with the general idea that organizations are complex entities, confronted with several institutional logics (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Greenwood et al., 2011; Jones, Maoret, & Massa, 2012). This essay proposes an integration between the concepts and relations of the Annales School, and the study of institutional change. Owing to distinction between the two domains, we first examine the compatibility of assumptions (Okhuysen & Bonardi, 2011). Both the Annales School and institutional theory rely on macro-explanations and recast actors in their historical and social contexts. They are compatible because they both compare higher-level orders of the determination of collective actions and strive to establish causality. We associate counterpart concepts in institutional theory with the notions of mentalities, multiple levels of time, and critical events from the Annales School.

We link mentalities to the disciplining effect of attention structures, situated rationalities, and interpretations appropriate to each institutional logic (Rao et al., 2003; Thornton & Ocasio,

1999). Mentalities constitute “what is distinctive about the thought processes and the set of beliefs of groups and societies” (Lloyd, 1990, p. 1); and, similarly, institutional logics cause actors to perceive, understand, and act on their environments in distinctive, taken-for-granted, and hard-to-reverse ways.

Multiple levels of time coincide with the distinct institutional constraints weighing on organizations (Greenwood et al., 2011). Each organization is positioned relative to the constraints and expectations characteristic of one or more logics. The constitutive dimensions of logics differ in their enduring qualities, malleability, and pace of change, or what we call their *temporal range of influence*.

Critical events are turning points at which society is reconfigured and structures are unveiled (Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Schüssler et al., 2013). Critical events are those exogenous events that trigger changes in how organizations represent their logics and raise questions about their focus of attention, sources of authority, norms, legitimacy, and identity. The more questions are raised and the more fundamental they are, the more critical is the event.

### **Critical Event-driven Mechanisms and Institutional Change**

Each logic has multiple and distinct dimensions that shape individual and organizational actions (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008): (a) attention focus, (b) classification and categorization, (c) contest for status and power, and (d) collective identities and identification. We order each dimension on a micro-macro social axis, with more micro and individualistic components at the bottom, and more encompassing and social aspects at the top. We suggest that each dimension has a distinct temporal range of influence that coincides with its micro or macro social level of analysis: at the bottom of the scale, as more micro and mobile, attention has a shorter span—that is, a shorter temporal range of influence than authority, norms, legitimacy, and identity.

In the Annales framework, mentalities are shared collective mental contingencies that are slow-changing, thus they belong to the structural level. The concept of mentalities is helpful in defining which dimensions of the logics are more slowly evolving than others: the part of logics relying on pure mental contingencies, without any underlying rationality or network externality will be more structural, less conjunctural and slower to change. This resonates with Thornton & Ocasio (1999), who stressed that family and religious logics have persisted unaffected over time because they tend to rely on subjective and unverifiable beliefs and assumptions – which is the underlying mechanism through which mentalities last.<sup>4</sup>

We argue that critical events, such as natural catastrophes, accidents, political reforms, economic and financial crises, military conflicts, and trade agreements, raise questions about the value or appropriateness of a logic and the system of rationality employed (Townley, 2002). Critical events manifest themselves as conflicts or contradictions between logics (Seo & Creed, 2002). They are the moments when the discrepancies and incongruity between assumptions, beliefs systems, and prescriptions become exposed. For example, shareholder maximization logic has justified several practices, such as agency-theory based incentive schemes (Clemente & Roulet, 2015; Ho, 2009). However, the financial turmoil of 2007-2008 was a critical event that shed a bright light on the previous assumptions, beliefs systems, and prescriptions that contradicted other institutional logics and higher-order values, such as fairness, welfare, and morality (Lok, 2010; Munir, 2011; Roulet, 2015). If the housing bubble had never burst, the financial world might have never been aware of and therefore learned from the mistakes and misbehaviors that led to the 2007–2008 crisis. According to the Annales School, critical events expose historical structures; thus, by analogy, in our model, critical events expose relationships between logics and their potential inconsistencies.

From an institutional perspective, critical events change the determinants of organizational actions (Hofmann & Ocasio, 2001; Schüssler et al., 2013; Seo & Creed, 2002). They may affect one, several, or all of the dimensions identified by Thornton and Ocasio (2008). Events push organizations to react, depending on which dimension is affected. At an organizational level, such questioning may lead to decisions to support the current order of things or to challenge it. At a broader level, multiple organizational decisions provoke institutional change, whether progressive or dramatic. In the following paragraphs, we describe each step of the process, connect our insights to the main concepts of the Annales School, and formulate some new research questions.

The Annales School regarded critical events as bursts of changes on the *surface* of history (Hall, 1980). Critical events are privileged moments that can unveil schemes of social interaction and act like turning points between historical periods (Castells et al., 2012; Galbraith, 1994; Le Roy Ladurie, 1971; Paruchuri & Ingram, 2012). According to our definition, we argue that one or more consequences may result from a critical event. First, the focus of attention might change, as crises unveil institutional contradictions and force actors to refocus (Seo & Creed, 2002). Second, a cognitive fracture might upend accepted categories and classifications. For example, social movements in the late 1960s caused a cognitive fracture among chefs, patrons, and critics, and gave birth to new categories of French haute cuisine (Rao et al., 2005). Third, leaders may be dethroned and new icons erected to replace past glories. The world of publishing in higher education, for instance, shows how mergers and acquisitions developed new CEO profiles and practices that obey market logic rather than an editorial logic (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). Fourth, re-identification can lead to new values, heroes, and groups. Creed, DeJordy, and Lok (2010) describe the identification process necessary for LGBT ministers to reconcile their holy texts, ministers' practices, and sexual identities.

Figure 1 illustrates each of these mechanisms and how they can affect a given logic. The critical events that have the greatest impact are likely to influence them all. Although the financial collapse of 2007 is just one example, it illustrates how a critical event can challenge all four dimensions of logics mentioned above, as many actors had to rethink their adherence to the logic of maximizing shareholder value (Munir, 2011). As they sought to refocus attention on new indicators, such new investment categories as socially responsible investments emerged. Goldman Sachs came under scrutiny as past glories lost their luster, and they sought re-identification by creating value through new economic models and profit sharing (Lok, 2010). Critical event-driven mechanisms, which are on the left in Figure 1, correspond to shifts in the dimensions identified in Thornton and Ocasio (2008). The spiral arrow indicates that these mechanisms affect the various dimensions of a logic, each dimension evolving at a different pace. Hence, on the right side, each dimension exerts a different temporal range of influence, which characterizes its malleability and the lasting effects of a dimension, whether shorter or longer.

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Insert Figure 1 about here  
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From the Annalists' perspective, the critical events that unveil the contradictions and conflicts within logics and among logics activate mechanisms that question the fundamental dimensions of institutional logics for an organization: basis of attention, source of authority, basis of norms, source of legitimacy, and sources of identity. They also prompt organizations to make choices and adopt practices. In the meantime, these events are themselves the result of slower-moving trends and the culmination of more progressive and continuous institutional change. One fundamental element that we draw from the Annales School is that each dimension of institutional logic has its own temporal range of influence, comparable to the different layers of

sand in Braudel's hourglass. Note that influences on organizational actions vary according to the event. More critical events result from more intense questioning, contradictions, and conflicts among logics. As a result, critical events stimulate more reactions and longer-range influences. When actors feel compelled to refocus their attention on their environment, they will also recategorize it, establish new social hierarchies and centers of power, and perhaps ultimately reconsider their identity and group membership.

### **Organizational Choices and Institutional Change**

Like the flipping hourglass, an Annales framework suggests that institutional changes encompasses a dual-causal chain is—from structure to events and back—with organizations being the drive belt for this recursive movement. We make the point that each critical-event mechanism implies the questioning and possible modification of a constitutive dimension of an institutional logic and helps explain why organizations conform to an existing institutional order (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). We are interested in explaining institutional changes that are historically significant and that can revert back as structural effects observable by historians. For changes with ramifications in the social, political, and economic spheres, we must understand why some organizations change their behaviors and instantiate their institutional logics differently—in particular, in the way they select and adopt practices (Smets et al., 2012). Smets et al. explained how new forms of practices can bring change to a whole field. Practice-driven institutional changes rely on a range of possibilities: decoupling (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Misangyi, Weaver, & Elms, 2008), coexistence (Jones et al., 2012; Lounsbury, 2007), hybridization (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2010), and a switch to new logics (Rao et al., 2005; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

Our insight on this fundamental question is that for an organization, the likelihood of any new institutional choice depends on how much critical events alter the actual dimensions of the main logic. The greater the magnitude—that is, the more upper-level mechanisms are activated—the more likely an organization is to reconsider its ways, routines, procedures, and practices (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Instead of one critical event triggering a shift in organizational practices and choices, the case of the blending of German and English legal traditions as investigated by Smets et al. (2012) suggests that a progressive spread of new practices foretells institutional change. As new practices emerge, other organizations feel the impact and make similar changes in their routines, procedures, and practices (Rao et al, 2005). This means that any challenged dimension can be an antecedent of decoupling, the least demanding of organizations' institutional actions. For an organization to decide in favor of more demanding institutional choices (coexistence, hybridization, or switching to a new logic), more dimensions of its institutional logic need to be challenged—and probably, for switching to another logic, all of them. Note, however, that if all the dimensions are challenged, an organization must consider all institutional choices. This implies that some may choose to switch to new logics (the most demanding), while others will limit themselves to less demanding ones, like coexistence and decoupling.

We propose that taken collectively, these institutional choices at the organizational level—in particular, practice engagement—produce perturbations at a broader level, which then prompt institutional change. For example, this process may jeopardize the dominance of an institutional logic (Rao et al., 2005); a new logic may substantially alter an organization's behavior, leading to new social orders (Durand & Jourdan, 2012; Pache & Santos, 2010) and to new practices that flourish and embody long-dormant principles of logics (Dunn & Jones, 2010). Eventually, at the society level, institutional changes—alterations in the presence, instantiation,

and dominance of institutional logics—become a matter of history. Annales historians suggested that mentalities change slowly and belong to the structural determinants of history. For us, by analogy, mentalities change as organizations modify their ways of instantiating institutional logics, redefining in a society the dominant dimensions of attention, cognition, status, and identification.

In organizational studies, history could be therefore defined as the description and analysis of changes in institutional orders and mentalities, choices in organizational logics and associated practices, and how and why organizations make these choices. The Annales historians advocated that history not only produces narratives of events, but also explains and identifies the triggers, mechanisms, and processes that have led to a new equilibrium. Figure 2 shows the recursive model of institutional and historical change mediated by organizational choices. Critical events (catastrophes, scandals, crises) expose conflicts and contradictions in the assumptions, beliefs, and prescriptions between institutional orders and logics. Critical events trigger mechanisms with various likelihoods of altering institutional logics' dimensions and of exercising short- or long- range influence on an organization's instantiation choices (Figure 1). These choices, collectively, modify institutional equilibrium and give birth to the possibility that new (critical) events will happen at the social and historical level. This model enables us to account for institutional choices made by organizations and explain new equilibrium—and each new equilibrium may carry the seeds of a new critical event and future change, giving shape to Braudel's "hourglass" movement referred to earlier. Our model puts forward the role of organization as a missing link in perpetuating the recursive nature of institutional change from structure to events, and from events to structure.

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Insert Figure 2 about here

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## **Discussion**

This essay builds on the Annales School of history to make some fundamental speculations regarding the recursive nature of institutional change. Building on the core concepts of the Annales School—mentalities, levels of time, and critical events—we elaborate on the temporal nature of institutional logics. In our model for organizations, critical events trigger questioning mechanisms about the different dimensions of logics and prompt new choices that have varying temporal ranges of influence. Depending on the number of choices, as well as how important and how effective these choices are, other organizations and collectives may adopt them and generate a movement toward institutional change. Thus, organizational choices are not simply determined by a downward historical and institutional causation; rather, they, in turn, determine how institutional components are maintained or altered dramatically, writing new chapters of economic, political, and social history.

## **Contribution to Organization Studies and Institutional Theory**

Our concept of institutional change as recursive and mediated by organizations shows how events reveal the distinctive nature of the constitutive dimensions of institutional logics and how these dimensions evolve at different paces. Braudel's three levels of time—structure, conjectures and events—can be adapted to incorporate a greater number of levels that correspond to distinct mechanisms with their own temporal range of influence, depending on the social, economic, or political phenomena under study. The causal principle remains: higher levels of time represent more enduring temporal ranges of influence. Our core argument focuses on the recursive nature of institutional change through the back-and-forth relationship between punctual occurrences—

critical events—and longer term trends, which are instantiated by the different dimensions of institutional logics. Organizations play the role of a junction in this model by acting as an intermediary between events (and their consequences for how organizations instantiate institutional logics) and institutional changes that derive from organizations' actions. This insight is aligned with calls for more multi-level research (Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999), although what we propose suggests as normative the existence of multiple levels across time ranges rather than across a scope of social actors.

This essay elaborates on a number of theoretical refinements that historicize institutional logics (Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014) by re-integrating the historical orientation of old institutionalism (Cloutier & Langley, 2013; Hirsch & Lounsbury, 1997; Ocasio et al., 2015) and enriching our understanding of interactions between institutions and actions (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). Our framework proposes four event-based mechanisms and the temporal ranges of influence on logic dimensions that determine the likelihood of organizations' adoption of different institutional choices, such as decoupling, coexistence, hybridization, and switching to a new logic. Organizations' institutional choices depend on the degree to which critical events trigger questions about logics' dimensions. As critical events provoke questions about the most constitutive and slow moving dimensions of the logics—those most anchored in the mentalities—the likelihood of more radical institutional choices (in ascending order: decoupling, coexistence, hybridization, and switching to a new logic) increases. As more mechanisms and more upper level ones are activated, questioning becomes more profound, and the scope of institutional choices widens. This model is amenable to more influences, such as each logics' plasticity, or to the external characteristics of the social environment (for instance, connectedness, centrality of actors, and field intermediaries). Further research would be required to understand the exact temporality of alternative forms of institutional change, such as practice-driven institutional

change (Smets, et al. 2012) and micro-history (Weinstein, 2005), or the more meso-approaches aligned with the Annales' attention to the masses (Spicer & Sewell, 2010).

Second, the framework in this paper helps flesh out the temporal dimensions of institutional logics. Historical contingency is a “key meta-theoretical assumption of the institutional logics approach” (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 108) and provides the basic justification for why some institutional logics have remained more influential over time than others. The temporal range of the influence of logics directly aligns with Meyer and Höllerer's (2014) argument that heterogeneity can also exist within institutional order (intra-institutional heterogeneity). Our work indeed suggests that there can be heterogeneity in the same institutional order across time. The degree to which the constitutive dimensions of logics reinforce each other and their temporal ranges of influence determine whether a logic will be instantiated and altered over time (Thornton et al, 2012). Accordingly, this essay offers basic theoretical elements to explain the variance in the persistence of logics, and further research could examine intra-institutional heterogeneity across time (Meyer & Höllerer, 2014).

Finally, these propositions can lead to reinterpret some existing works on institutional contradiction and complexity (Greenwood et al., 2011; Seo & Creed, 2002) and on institutional change (Garud, et al. 2002). Scott, Ruef, Mendel, and Carenna (2000) showed that in the healthcare sector, changes in logics were constrained by their rigidity, which slowed the time taken to expedite government arrangements. Indeed, because critical event-driven mechanisms challenge the dimensions of institutional logics to varying degrees, it is unlikely that all logics will be equally sensitive to transformational mechanisms (change in attention focus, cognitive fracture, change in status, re-identification). As such, resistance to change of different institutional logics deserves more study, as well as the interactions between the multiple levels of time that lead to organizational choices (e.g., Reinecke & Ansari, 2015).

## **Limitations of the Annales School**

As a body of concepts, the Annales School has had only a certain amount of influence beyond direct contemporary historians and social scientists, mostly because the Annalists mostly published in their own journal, in French. The Annales' role in academic research in history started to decline in the 1980s, for several possible reasons. Skepticism regarding grand narratives in history has taken the discipline away from the study of long-term trends (Weinstein, 2005). Historians have also struggled to capture and define the boundaries of objective and subjective time (Koselleck, 2004). A number of ideas, including the analytical lens, have also become more mainstream in historical approaches (Clark, 1999) and in sociology (Diepeveen-Jansen, 2001). Nevertheless, "the Annales School [...] represents twentieth-century historiography at its most innovative, dynamic and all-encompassing" (Clark, 1999, p. xi). The plasticity of the Annales concepts makes it particularly adapted to advancing a historically informed account of organization and management theory.

Following recent works that have sought to unify the Annales School framework (Burguière, 2009; Lloyd, 1990; Tandler, 2013), we have tried to articulate mentalities, levels of time, and events in a coherent framework with existing concepts in organization theory, and space remains to enrich them.

## **Conclusion**

This work contributes to the fertile crossovers between history and organizational studies by relating one approach to history (the Annales School) with one perspective on organizational studies (institutional theory and, in particular, institutional logics). Building on Kipping and Uskiden's (2014) "historical cognizance"—the idea that organization theory must acknowledge

time as a key boundary and history as an important contextual factor—we use the conceptual tools offered by the *Annales* to better conceptualize the temporality of logics and institutional change. We foresee even richer debates between history and organization studies. The former nurtures the latter with relevant concepts and methods. The latter weave a dialogue with the former around the influence of organizations in making history. Together, they add to the body of knowledge that articulates long-range causes with short-span actions. They emphasize critical events as triggering mechanisms and activating processes that disrupt current equilibria and lead to new ones, and position organizations as crucial makers of history.

The idea of conceiving human agency at the core of history is not new (Sewell, 2005), but this essay emphasizes organizations and their pivotal role in swaying factors that make history. Organizations instantiate institutions and their logics, and make collective choices that can disrupt historical equilibria. Beyond crowds, classes, and movements, organizations help explain the prominence of certain views and beliefs (e.g., the state as a superior force; the firm as the most efficient producer; professions as the most knowledgeable collectives, and so forth), and the existence of certain historical paths. This shift in focus toward intermediate levels of analysis complements classical historical narratives and comparisons that occur at either the individual (as in the history of famous or infamous actors) or macro level (the history of entire regions or global events).

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>According to Thornton and Ocasio (2008, p. 117), “These are different strategies of macro-causal analysis—ways that researchers iterate between theory and history in identifying the causes of an outcome. The narrative analysis method is used to understand the ordering of circumstantial detail in searching for analogies that are the foundation for new and convincing accounts. In the institutional logics literature, it is the institutional orders of the inter-institutional system that provide the meta-theory which points to these analogies and that prevent the analysis from getting bogged down in the minutia of historical details.”

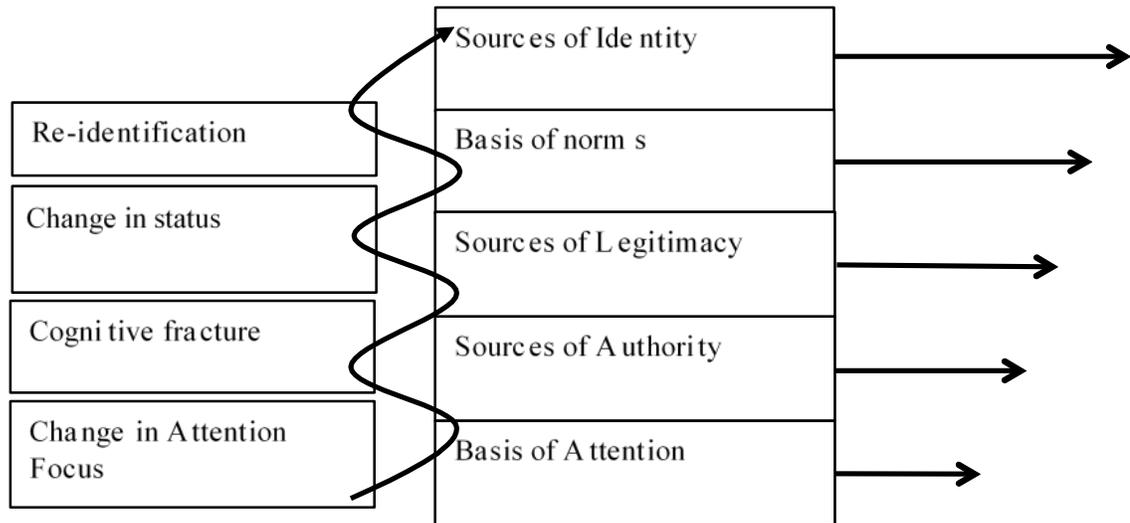
<sup>2</sup>The original name of the journal was *Annales d’Histoire Economique and Sociale* (1929-1938). During the war, it appeared as the *Annales d’Histoire Sociale* (1939-1942) and *Mélanges d’Histoire Sociale* (1942-1945). After the war, the title became *Annales. Economies. Sociétés. Civilisation*, which remained unaltered until 1994 when it was renamed *Annales. Histoire, Science Sociales*.

<sup>3</sup>Whereas mentalities were central to the first wave of the Annales, the second wave focused on economic history, using mentalities as a secondary concept (Le Goff, 1996; Tandler, 2013). Mentalities took center stage again in the 1960s with the emergence of demographic history as a modern development from the Annales School and questions about their embedded rationality (Foucault, 1969; Lloyd, 1990).

<sup>4</sup>Note that this is just one suggestion for how to order the dimensions. We do not pretend that this hierarchy is the only one possible or that it applies to every situation. What matters is the idea that logics’ dimensions can be ordered and that, as a consequence, they do not all share the same “levels of time”; some last longer unchanged (at the top of the order), whereas others are more versatile (at the bottom of the hierarchy).

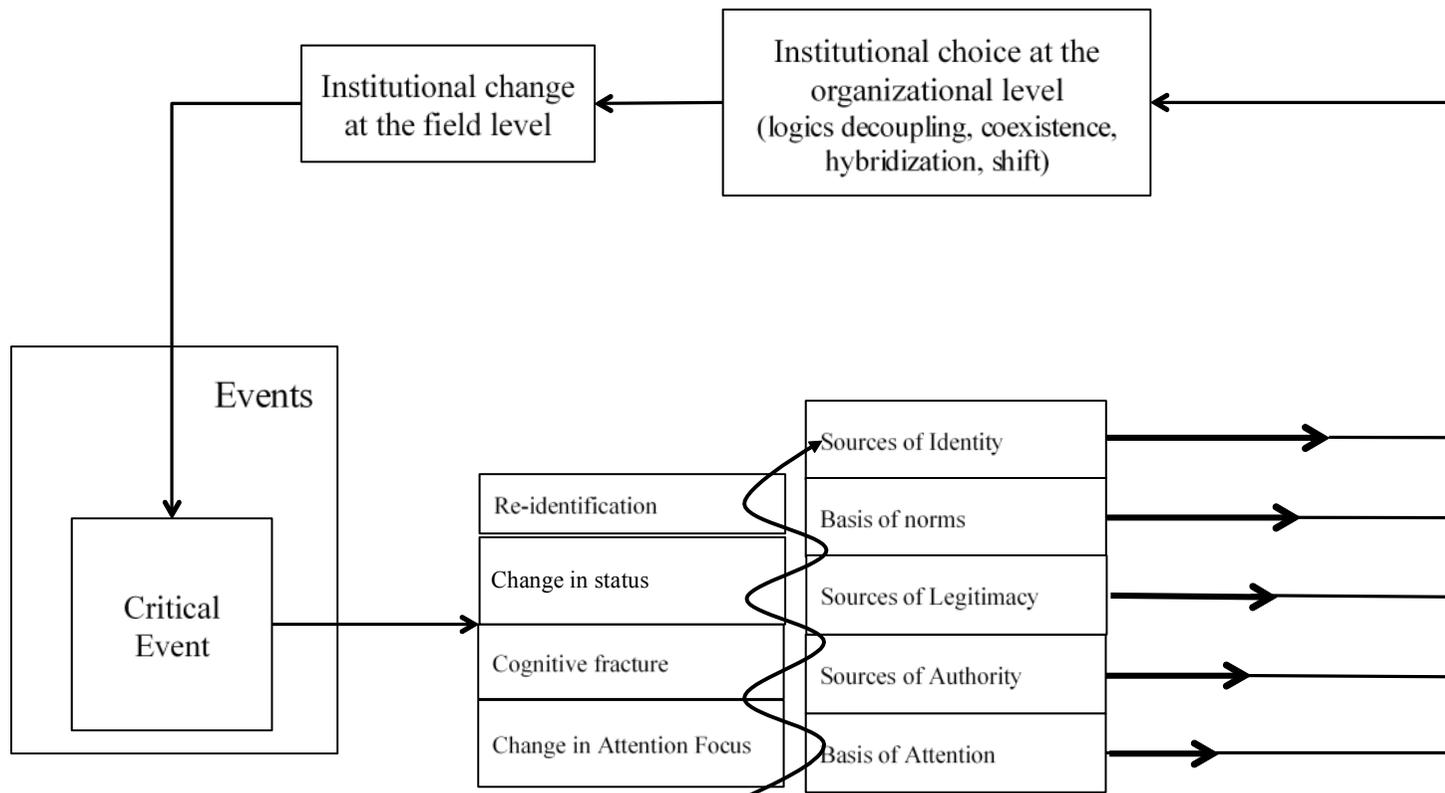
## FIGURES

**Figure 1. Critical event-driven mechanisms and sources of institutional choice**



**Legend. Left:** The critical event-driven mechanisms on the left correspond to shifts in the dimensions identified in Thornton and Ocasio (2008): attention focus, classification and categorization, contest for status and power, and collective identities and identification. **Center:** dimensions characterizing an institutional logic. The spiral arrow indicates that mechanisms affect the various dimensions of a logic. **Right:** temporal range of influence for each dimension, that characterizes its malleability and the shorter or longer lasting effects of a dimension.

**Figure 2. Institutional choices and the recursive nature of institutional change**



**Legend.** The three inspirational components from the Annales School are recast here in a model of institutional change. Historical events (catastrophes, scandals, crises...) become critical when they expose conflicts and contradictions in the assumptions, beliefs, and prescriptions between institutional orders and logics. Critical events trigger mechanisms with various likelihood to alter institutional logics' dimensions, and short- or long- range influences on an organization's instantiation choices. These choices, collectively, modify the field's institutional equilibrium and gives birth to the possibility of new (critical) events' happenstance.