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A reading of organizational institutionalism using Karl Weick's organizing theory

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to highlight the possibilities of using the organizing approach as a micro foundation for organizational institutionalism given that it presents a theory of action more adequate than the ones which predominate in the institutionalist works. Based on the assumption that action in organizations is guided by comprehensive institutional orders that are not, however, isolated from social interaction and sense-building processes, it is proposed to integrate institutional theory with the approach of organizing as a base for the analysis of organizational processes. Through a review of what we call different "waves" of neo-institutional theory in organizations, we theorize the relationship between organizing, sensemaking, and institutions. In addition to presenting a synthesis of the trajectory of organizational institutionalism, we highlight some epistemological shifts observed within this theoretical body over time. Finally, we present the potential contributions of the use of an analytical lens that takes the approach of organizing (WEICK, 1979) as a theoretical micro foundation suitable for the institutional analysis of strategies and practices employed for the maintenance in organization.

Keywords: Non-conventional organizations. Organizational institutionalism. Organizing. Karl Weick.

Leitura do institucionalismo organizacional a partir da teoria do organizar de Karl Weick

Resumo

O objetivo central deste artigo é evidenciar as possibilidades de uso da teoria do organizar de Karl Weick como microfundamento para o institucionalismo organizacional, considerando que essa abordagem da ação se mostra mais adequada do que aquelas predominantes nos estudos institucionalistas. Partindo do pressuposto de que a ação em organizações se orienta por ordens institucionais abrangentes que não estão desconectadas da interação social e dos processos de construção de sentidos, propõe-se a integração entre o institucionalismo organizacional e a teoria do organizar como base para a análise de processos organizativos. Por meio de revisão das denominadas "ondas" da teoria neoinstitucional em organizações, aborda-se a relação entre o organizar, a construção de sentidos e as instituições. Além de apresentar uma síntese da trajetória do institucionalismo organizacional, destacam-se deslocamentos epistemológicos observados no âmbito desse corpo teórico ao longo do tempo. Por fim, apresentam-se as potenciais contribuições do uso da teoria do organizar (WEICK, 1979) como microfundamento teórico adequado para a análise institucional de estratégias e práticas empregadas para a manutenção de organizações.

Palavras-chave: Organizações não convencionais. Institucionalismo organizacional. Organizar. Karl Weick.

Una lectura del institucionalismo en organizaciones a partir de la teoría del organizar de Karl Weick

Resumen

El objetivo central de este trabajo es evidenciar las posibilidades de uso de la teoría del organizar como microfundamento para el institucionalismo organizacional, dado que ese abordaje de la acción demuestra ser más adecuado que aquellos predominantes en los estudios institucionalistas. Partiendo del presupuesto de que la acción en organizaciones se orienta por órdenes institucionales integrales que no están desconectadas de la interacción social y de los procesos de construcción de sentidos, se propone la integración del institucionalismo organizacional con la teoría del organizar como base para el análisis de procesos organizativos. Por medio de la revisión de las denominadas "olas" de la teoría neoinstitucional en organizaciones, se aborda la relación entre el organizar, la construcción de sentidos y las instituciones. Además de presentar una síntesis de la trayectoria del institucionalismo organizacional, se destacan desplazamientos epistemológicos observados en el ámbito de este cuerpo teórico a lo largo del tiempo. Por último, se presentan las contribuciones potenciales de la utilización de la teoría del organizar (WEICK, 1979) como microfundamento teórico adecuado para el análisis institucional de estrategias y prácticas empleadas para el mantenimiento de organizaciones.

Palabras clave: Organizaciones no convencionales. Institucionalismo organizacional. Organizar. Karl Weick.

INTRODUCTION

Dealing with managerial issues is a challenge for organizations such as agrarian reform rural settlers cooperatives and also for Culture Points, organizational structures set up under the Living Culture Program of the Culture Ministry. The experimental character of these organizations stresses one of the central assumptions of institutional theory in organizations: the idea that organizations become similar in conforming to institutionalized beliefs as a way of achieving legitimacy (ABERNETHY and CHUA, 1996; LOW and JOHNSTON, 2008; MARQUIS, GLYNN and DAVIS, 2007; MEYER and ROWAN, 1977; DIMAGGIO and POWELL, 1983). How is legitimacy built when institutionalized beliefs are fragmented, and there is no consolidated organizational field?

This article investigates how the practices of organizing are maintained in organizations, especially those that are not located in strongly institutionalized organizational fields. For that, a model of institutional inspiration that is adequate to the analysis of organizing in spaces where alternative forms of organized collective action emerge is proposed (ROTHSCHILD-WHITT, 1979; PARKER, CHENEY, FOURNIER et al., 2014). By alternative forms of organized collective action, we refer to organizations formalized from configured accumulations in diverse trajectories of political action, often as an expression of strategies of legitimation and/or mobilization of resources, if not of extension of the space of representation of specific segments' social rights. As striking examples, in addition to the cooperatives of family farmers and rural settlers and the Culture Points, one can highlight solidary economic enterprises and neighborhood associations.

Based on the assumption that action in organizations is guided by cultural, symbolic and interpretive references and, at the same time, emerges from social interaction, we seek an analytical key adequate to the investigation of the spatial and temporally situated character of individual and organizational action and the construction of meanings, here understood as a social reality's objectification process (BERGER and LUCKMANN, 1974) and as a collective bargaining on the plausible interpretations around the ambiguous character of social reality (WEICK, 1979). In considering ambiguity and equivocality as formulated in Karl Weick's theory of organizing, it is sought to increase the potential of use of organizational institutionalism as a theoretical key to the analysis and understanding of organizational processes realized around formal organizations in the Global South. The theory of organizing provides a specific view of the organizational phenomenon by conceiving that the organization does not exist as a stable entity, endowed with a uniquely apprehensible essential condition, but as a repetitive cycle of intertwined behaviors that are continually made, unmade and remade through processes of retrospective attention that make possible the construction of meanings about the ambiguous circumstances that characterize the daily organizational life.

Initially, the process of emergence of institutional theory in organizations is resumed, seeking to illustrate the formation of different currents of thought nested around this denomination. Using the idea of "waves," these currents are grouped based on the different forms of theoretical articulation observed in the literature. Next, the theory of organizing (WEICK, 1979) is presented as a micro-sociological foundation with an appropriate action approach to the expansion of the analytical potential of organizational institutionalism. After an integrative exercise based on the apparent theoretical tensions between the two approaches, a proposal of institutional analysis of the organizing is presented.

The proposed systematization contributes to the field of organizational studies by highlighting the epistemological shifts observed in the development of the theoretical body of institutionalism in organizations. Besides, the study identifies the central theoretical tensions between the organizing approach (WEICK, 1979) and organizational institutionalism, allowing them to be examined frontally and, thus, clarified. At the same time, it offers theoretical support for the investigation of organizational processes carried out in the Global South.

ORGANIZATIONAL INSTITUTIONALISM: BETWEEN THE PROFUSION OF CURRENTS AND ITS MICROSSOCIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Organizational institutionalism is a broad theoretical field that is based on a common assumption: action in organizations is influenced by different referential frameworks of different orders – cultural, symbolic, interpretive, among others – articulated around the idea of institutions. Institutions delimit the action, being able to potentiate it, to neutralize it or to embarrass it. Individuals, in turn, can reinforce or challenge institutions by acting. Under this common idea, many chains were developed using different levels of analysis, emphasizing different institutional dimensions - coercive, normative and cognitive - and treating the organizational structure (POWELL and DIMAGGIO, 1991; SCOTT, 1995).

In the first wave of institutionalist studies, the analytical approach was prioritized in individual organizations and/or networks of organizations directly articulated among themselves – the so-called inter-organizational networks (SELZNICK, 1949). The normative dimension of the institutions, that is, the character of the "moral rule" that they assumed, guided the analysis of the informal structures resulting from recurrent social interactions (POWELL and DIMAGGIO, 1991). Instead of referring to the analysis in the formal structure of organizations, the authors of this period approached the informal structures emerging from social interactions, evidencing how they deviated from the formal aspects of organizations and subverted their rationalized goals (POWELL and DIMAGGIO, 1991).

The central concern of the authors was to explain the non-rational dimensions of organizational life, those that escaped from organizations as organized systems of activities. This concern gained prominence through the studies of Phillip Selznick and Arthur Stinchcombe. In the classic TVA and the Grassroots, Selznick (1949) analyzed the relationship between conflicts and organizational strategies that resulted in the intentional co-optation by the governmental initiative organization - the Tennessee Valley Authority - of organizations that existed in the areas where the program sought to promote forms of rural development (POWELL and DIMAGGIO, 1991). Stinchcombe (1965), in his chapter for the Handbook of Organizations organized by James March, sought to emphasize the political character of organizations in their process of interacting with the societies that surround them, showing how social structures could induce (concept of imprinting) inertial patterns in organizations - due to the diverse interests - that were reproduced in their own society.

Selznick (1949) explored the relevance of a fraction of organizational life that emerged despite the formal structure of the TVA when examining the constitution of punctual and informal coalitions. These micro-processes constrained the formal structure of the organization, redesigning its presumed mission in favor of informally coordinated interests (POWELL and DIMAGGIO, 1991). Stinchcombe (1965), in turn, was one of the first organizational authors to show the effects of structural reproduction promoted through organizations.

Both authors conceived of the organizations as integrated to the local communities, having ties of loyalty with organizations of their surroundings. Proximity relations occupied a central role in the construction of the environment and organizations. With the extension of this dynamics over time, organizations eventually acquired value in themselves, becoming a source of normative institutional pressures that led the organizational actors to conform to them (POWELL and DIMAGGIO, 1991). In this sense, the idea of co-optation (SELZNICK, 1949) and the concept of imprinting stand out (STINCHCOMBE, 1965).

In the second wave of institutionalist studies, the concept of "organizational field" gained notoriety (SCOTT, 1995). The cultural-cognitive approach assumed a central role through the emphasis attributed to classifications, routines and interpretive schemes as explanatory categories that revealed the role of the symbolic dimension of the organizational structure in the formation of action. Therefore, the analysis of the social structure occurred through the cognitive approach, so that the investigations turned to the interpretation of roles and scripts typified as an expression of conformity or challenge to the structural attributes. Thus, concepts such as isomorphism (POWELL and DIMAGGIO, 1991) and decoupling (MEYER and ROWAN, 1977) gained prominence as a way of explaining why organizations became similar and sought legitimacy in their field of action, respectively.

The central concern, therefore, was to explain the diffusion of common organizational structures and forms in different sectors and localities. As argued by the authors of the period, the adoption of these structures assumed a ceremonial character, being used as a way of legitimizing the organization in its field of action (MEYER and ROWAN, 1977). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) extended the interpretation of institutional diffusion by proposing a typology for the analysis of isomorphism in its

coercive, mimetic and normative origins. The typology proposed by the authors made it possible to identify different origins of organizational homogenization. In order to meet the requirements imposed by organizations on which they depended, taking prestigious organizations as a reference or trying to acquire the formal characteristics prevailing in their field of action, organizations would become isomorphic in seeking legitimacy from the public and other organizations.

The third wave of organizational institutionalism was based around the concern with the predilection for macro-institutional analysis that was observed in previous works. As a consequence of this predilection, the micro-social foundations of the analyzed phenomena have been neglected (BARLEY, 2008; PLOW and COLYVAS, 2008; MUNIR, 2015; SUDDABY, 2010, 2015; HIRSCH and LOUNSBURY, 2015; WILLMOTT, 2011, 2015). The result was a specialization in the investigation of components that operated at levels far from social interactions: civil service reforms (TOLBERT and ZUCKER, 1983), constitution of rules in internal labor markets (DOBBIN, SUTTON, MEYER et al., 1993) or transformations in the forms of corporate control (FLIGSTEIN, 1990). In explaining comprehensive phenomena, the mentioned works distanced themselves from the organizational actors, removing any centrality from the arguments presented (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006).

Responding to this prognosis, the works of this period reworked the relationship between structure and agency through the propositions of theorists such as Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006). The reading of the actors' disappearance of the explanations has led to the development of approaches such as institutional entrepreneurship (DIMAGGIO, 1988; MAGUIRE, HARDY and LAWRENCE, 2004; HARDY and MAGUIRE, 2008) and institutional work (LAWRENCE, SUDABBY and LECA, 2009). At a later date, the criticism was that such efforts to put action back at the center of the analysis had resulted in certain forms of voluntarism recurred (LAWRENCE and SUDDABY, 2006; LAWRENCE, SUDABBY and LECA, 2009; SUDABBY, 2010). It was in this context that the current of the inhabited institutions (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006; HALLETT, 2010) gained prominence. Here, the concern was with the process of the signification of the structural attributes observed in everyday interactions. The social structure, therefore, was more than the defining source of the formation of action, was formed by action.

At any rate, criticisms of a new order came to the surface. Martí and Mair (2009) identified the establishment of two standards: a predominant focus in the so-called "developed world"; and an emphasis on the study of the action of powerful actors. On the theoretical level, Voronov and Vince (2012) argue that the project of institutional work did not make it possible to investigate how individuals experience institutions, especially by not properly considering the role of emotions and unconscious action in individual processes of signification.

It is not in the interest of this study to propose a thorough examination of the main criticisms addressed to each of these currents, nor the investigation of the answers presented by the authors who have dedicated themselves to them. It is, however, a recognition and an inquiry. If, on the one hand, interest in change became the central concern of the investigations, retaking the relationship between action and institutions as the primary focus (NOGUEIRA, 2014), how to explain the theoretical fragmentation that came to characterize organizational institutionalism in its period?

Bringing possible answers to this question, it is realized a rescue of the first works with theoretical questions addressed to the organizational institutionalism. Secondly, a brief synthesis of the micro-sociological foundations taken as anchoring in different lines of work is presented to explain the role of action and individuals in the institutional dynamics. Finally, we introduce the theory of organizing (WEICK, 1979) as an alternative basis.

Action and individuals in institutional dynamics

In 1988, Lynne Zucker published the book "Institutional patterns and organizations: culture and environment", the result of a conference where the foundations of organizational neoinstitutionalism were debated. Although they adopted different emphases, the researchers shared the diagnosis that the discipline was facing theoretical problems (EDWARDS, 2015).

Paul DiMaggio (1988) opened the volume recognizing the predominance of a view of social systems as strongly institutionalized, with an inherent tendency towards stability. In the opposite direction, Lynne Zucker (1988) signed the second chapter of the introduction defining social systems as socially entropic, which would necessitate efforts to maintain them (EDWARDS, 2015). For DiMaggio (1988), the question would be how institutional change could occur despite pressures for stability. According to Zucker (1988), it would remain to answer how institutions could be maintained in a context of social entropy

where non-institutional factors, such as self-interest and conflicts between the macro and micro levels of the social order, impact the social order.

A second division between the conceptions presented by the authors is the conception of the agency. While DiMaggio (1988) coined, the term institutional entrepreneur to refer to the organizational agent endowed with the material and symbolic interests and conditions necessary to redraw institutional arrangements to accommodate his interests, Zucker (1988) pointed to formally organized collectivities as the primary source of change in institutions.

In both formulations, the authors took concepts from the systemic approaches that characterized the functionalist paradigm of organizational analysis. The idea of entropy, borrowed by Zucker (1988) from the studies of thermodynamics in the field of physics, reveals the presence of the organic analogies that characterize this social way of thinking. However, the conception of reality as tending towards stability and order, another feature of the paradigm (MOTTA, 1986), is challenged by the author's view. The process of entropy is dynamic and transformative. In common sense, the view of organizations as collective agency space leaves change as a possibility to underline the formulation (ZUCKER, 1988).

However, the articulation presented by DiMaggio (1988) had a more significant impact. The emphasis attributed to the stability of the macrostructures resulted in a certain tendency towards structural determinism. Later, in attempting to explain change by taking the same formulation as a beacon, some authors presented stereotyped views of institutional entrepreneurs, trivializing the possibility of institutional change as a result of agonistic choices (MUTCH, 2017).

Starting from different positions of those that substantiated the currents of institutional Entrepreneurship (DIMAGGIO, 1988; MAGUIRE, HARDY and LAWRENCE, 2004; HARDY and MAGUIRE, 2008) and institutional work (LAWRENCE and SUDDABY, 2006; LAWRENCE, SUDABBY and LECA, 2009), two new strands gained prominence recently: the institutional logics (FRIEDLAND and ALFORD, 1991; THORNTON, OCASIO and LOUNSBURY, 2012) and the inhabited institutions (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006; HALLETT, 2010).

Friedland and Alford (1991) introduced the concept of institutional logics by identifying five institutional orders characteristic of Western societies: the bureaucratic state; family; religion; market; and democracy. Each of them would respond to a specific institutional logic that would constitute, in turn, the actors (individuals and organizations) and society. Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsburry (2012) added two institutional orders to the initial formulation: community; and professions. Radicalizing the socioconstructionism underlying the initial formulation, the authors proposed the decoupling between the institutional orders and logics. For some authors, this proposition released researchers to investigate the interaction between different logics (GLYNN, 2013).

While this proposition has yielded a comprehensive set of works that investigate the hybrid character of organizations and organizational fields, removing isomorphism and ceremonial adoption of organizational forms as an explanatory key, some questions can be made. Firstly, it does not seem reasonable to take Western societies as homogeneous, especially concerning the possibility of indiscriminating dissociation between institutional orders and institutional logics in the so-called developing countries located in the West. Secondly, taking as given the possibility of hybridization can result in the disregard of the contradictory character, when not excludent, assumed by institutional orders such as the market and the community, for example. By radicalizing the socioconstructionism of Berger and Luckmann (1974), the current of institutional logics ended up disregarding the totalizing and contradictory character intrinsic to the reality in contemporary complex societies (SEO and CREED, 2002).

Tim Hallett and Marc J. Ventresca (2006) proposed a "repopulation" of institutional theory through the current of the inhabited institutions. For the authors, the view of institutions as supraorganisational logics and the disregard of the role of social interactions generated an "decoupling" between the organizational sociology of institutionalist and its micro-sociological foundations, which passed the be referenced ceremonially as a way of guaranteeing legitimacy in the academic field (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006; BARLEY, 2008).

Inspired by symbolic interactionism, Hallett and Ventresca (2006) lent the term inhabited institutions (SCULLY and CREED, 1997) to identify a re-reading of Gouldner's work "Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy" (1954). By focusing on the interactions and the way people "do things together" (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006, p. 215), the authors evidenced the negotiated character of the microsocial component of the institutions. These negotiations occur around a previously established social order, but also about immediate interactions between actors occupying different institutional roles. Thus, variations occur in the way institutions are experienced, given the different nuances of meanings attributed to the same institution in a shared context (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006).

Inhabited institutionalism resumes the senses as a fundamental concept in institutional theory, explicitly engaging with them as a product of the interactions located (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006; HALLETT, 2010; HAEDICKE, 2012). This posture extrapolates the vision of the senses that marked the new institutionalism, where they were seen as implicit and inert cultural elements. The focus on the internal dynamics of organizations allowed an understanding of how different patterns of meanings emerge in the interactions guided by a comprehensive institutional framework such as the bureaucratic one, in the case investigated by the authors. The adoption of an internal perspective enabled the investigation of how "institutionalized systems of meanings are understood and interpreted within the scope of organizations" (SUDDABY, 2010, p. 18).

The idea of inhabited institutions mitigates the connection of organizational institutionalism with the entrapment of the exacerbated emphasis on the rhetoric of institutional change (MUTCH, 2017). At the same time, it guarantees analytical space for non-cognitive manifestations of the agency, as in cases of action motivated by emotions and beliefs (FRIEDLAND, 2009; VORONOV and VINCE, 2012). Moreover, it relocates the individuals and their interactions at the center of the analysis, covering "the Cognitive/Phenomenological foundations" that constitute the nucleus of the institutional argument (SUDABBY, VIALE and GENDRON, 2016, p. 227).

On the other hand, the approach circumscribes its theory of action to the boundaries of symbolic interactionism. As highlighted by Fine (1993, p. 69), the "argument that interactionists believe only in agential choices has been a frequent criticism of the perspective." At the same time, it does not provide adequate treatment for history in the formation of action, given that it sits on the prerogative that the interactions occur like that in a theatrical performance, where the actors perform roles and scripts informed by local systems of senses (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006). Without adequate consideration of the relationship between history and biographies (WRIGHT-MILLS, 1975), it is challenging to perform diachronic analyses.

Brazilian authors sought to deal with these limitations using a structurationist reading of institutional theory (MACHADO-DA-SILVA, FONSECA and CRUBELLATE, 2005), giving centrality to the role of interpretation in the constitution of the relationship structure/agency. In a more evident way, they sustain a multiparadigmatic path to the institutional approach, reinforcing not only the intentional and unintentional aspects of the agency but rather the structural model of Anthony Giddens, but above all the recursive character of institutionalization, with a strong emphasis on the intersubjective interpretation of the structures (MACHADO-DA-SILVA, FONSECA and CRUBELLATE, 2005).

Enactment and institutional dynamics

A little explored path in the national literature, although not more unprecedented (MACIEL, WEYMER and AUGUSTO, 2012) is the use of the concept of enactment (WEICK, 1979) as a basis for the theorization of organizational action.

The production of meanings employing daily practices informed by the predominant social order and the accumulated experience makes organizing (WEICK, 1979) an interesting alternative for the investigation of institutional dynamics. Although articulated mostly around the idea of creating meaning, the possibility of integration between the two approaches was encouraged by several authors (WEICK, SUTCLIFFE and OBSTFELD, 2005; POWELL and COLYVAS, 2008; SANDBERG and TSOUKAS, 2015). This call inspired conceptual works (WEBER and GLYNN, 2006; CORNELISSEN and CLARKE, 2010) and also empiric ones (COLEMAN, CHECKLAND, HARRISON et al., 2010; JENSEN, KJÆRGAARD and SVEJVIG, 2009; SHARMA and GOOD, 2013). Still, little has been said about the essential elements formulated differently in the two approaches: the conception of action and the relationship between the organization and the environment.

While the new institutionalism suffers criticism for the lack of an appropriate agency theory (DIMAGGIO, 1988; POWELL and COLYVAS, 2008), the theory of organizing has in the concept of enactment its mastery of action. While the distinction between the organization and the environment is central in institutional theory, in organizing (WEICK, 1979) it is relationally conceived (EMIRBAYER, 1997): from the position of the organizational agent, the environment exists as he perceives it and, especially, in the way he realizes it. The initial work of Karl Weick (1979) will be resumed as a way of dealing with these theoretical tensions.

ORGANIZING AND ORGANIZATION: BETWEEN THE VERB AND THE NOUN

The theory of organizing was presented in the book "The Social Psychology of Organizing" (WEICK, 1979) as a specific way to investigate the organizational phenomenon, also allowing a critique of the assumptions of the dominant organizational theories at the time. Assuming that every organization is endowed with a specific purpose and an essential rationality, the traditional conceptualizations reified the organization and generated a set of analytical inaccuracies. For example: taking of occasional evidence as a generalizable empirical basis, assuming an analytical tendency to the dissolution of individuals in favor of a pretense organizational homogeneity; and creating distortions in the attempts to delineate of what is internal and external to the organization (WEICK, 1979).

Criticism of utilitarian approaches is the first common point between organizational institutionalism and organizing. The hegemony of organizational analysis models based on the idea of individuals and organizations as calculators of consequences took the attention of researchers from several areas. While theorists of the sociology of organizations forged the institutionalist response, the organizing approach emerged in the field of social psychology. The two currents responded differently to the open systems theory (KATZ and KAHN, 1978; SCOTT, 1995), which gave an analytical emphasis to the relations between the organization and the surrounding environment.

In organizing, the idea that the organization does not exist as a stable relative, but as a result of "intertwined behaviors" immersed in conditionally related processes is central. Thus, it is understood as the conjunction between processes of interaction that create, conserve and dissolve collectivities continually, being the organization "the ways in which such processes are continually executed" (WEICK, 1979, p. 1). The constitution of organization would be given through the interaction between individuals. In the organizational institutionalism, in general, the inverse path was adopted: the organization, as a structural form, was understood as a precedent concerning individuals and, therefore, to action.

For Weick (1979), organizing results from the formation of repetitive cycles of interconnected reciprocal behaviors. Given the ambiguities of everyday life, these cycles present themselves as useful social forms to the imperative of constructing meanings about the continuous flow of experience (SCHUTZ, 1967; WEICK, 1979). Thus, the individual level assumes primacy to the organizational. In institutional theory, organizations are seen as mechanisms created for the dissolution of social dilemmas (ZUCKER, 1988). In the words of Selznick (1949), as recalcitrant tools. Here, the organizational level has an analytical primacy over the individual.

However, this contradiction is not insurmountable. Inhabited institutionalism (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006) is an expression of efforts to reengage institutional theory in its microsocial foundations. The analytical primacy given to the individual does not presuppose the absence of the organization as a structural social form. It only conceives the organizational level as a function of the individual level. Moreover, it is the character located in this analytical focus that guarantees the space for the theory of action inscribed in organizing.

The way social reality is conceived by Weick (1979) configures one of the corners of this theory of action. The social world is understood as a space of ambiguity where the social actors act to constitute the primary reference to be interpreted. It is for this reason that the senses assume theoretical centrality. Here, although in its terms, the propositions of the author find the vision of the socially entopic reality elaborated by Zucker (1988), a prominent author of institutionalist works.

The production of meanings is understood as a process of retrospective attention. A situation cannot be subject to full reflective attention while it occurs. Although situated in a particular place and at a given moment, attention is dedicated to what has already occurred, to the experiences lived. Thus, the meaning of any action or event is how attention sees them after they have occurred. This process is not infallible to the interests of the actors, nor to the projects in which they are inserted. Contextual and institutional factors also influence the attention dispensed to events and actions, as well as the selective attention process that identifies certain clues to the detriment of others (WEICK, 1979; WEICK, SUTCLIFFE and OBSTFELD, 2005).

Openly influenced by phenomenology (SCHUTZ, 1967), Weick (1979) parts of the idea that individuals exist in any collectivity immersed in a continuous current of experience. Once lived, the experience becomes available to awareness. When the attention process occurs, the implicated individual departs from the continuous current of experience, and can, through his

attention, segment events or past actions so that they become more definite and possibly meaningful. It is through this process, called enactment by Weick (1979), that the ambiguities intrinsic to the continuous current of experience are dissipated or minimized, allowing the construction and attribution of senses to actions, experiences, and events.

Although the constructed senses may present some order of precariousness, they constitute the information that subsides the organizing. Faced with the ambiguous character of social reality, individuals act so that they can create something palatable to interpretation. Enactment is a process of action-interpretation. The concept reveals that, as the events and actions gain meaning through retrospective care, being understood as existing, the organization is the product of the action of individuals and groups through the same process (WEICK, 1979). Thus, the role of cognition is formulated in an enlarged way concerning that observed in organizational neoinstitutionalism: more than pre-established interpretative schemes and guided by multiscalar cultural repertoires, cognition responds to interpretative processes located in time and space, which, however, are supported by past experiences. As we propose, the centrality of the past experiences in formulating the approach ensures the consideration of history, in its relationship with the individual biography (WRIGHT-MILLS, 1975), in the analysis framework. As the institutions themselves are the result of history (SEO and CREED, 2002; SUDDABY, FOSTER, MILLS, et al., 2013), this entry also reveals an approximation with the institutional theory.

Weick (1979) establishes two subsequent elements to enactment: selection and retention. While the enactment creates content endowed with meaning that nourishes information to organize, in the selection dissipates most of the incident ambiguity. The triggering of established criteria, i.e., locally sedimentary rules, and norms delimit the possibilities of information selected as plausible. Through these criteria, the diversity present in the ambiguous information is separated, so that it becomes possible to identify the pieces of information appropriate to them. In the retention process, the items ordered in the selection, unpublished in the system, are integrated into the items retained in previous processes. By reorganizing past and unprecedented information, it also ends up dispelling ambiguity residues, constituting a referential basis for assimilation of future situations (WEICK, 1979).

The triad enactment-selection-retention constitutes the theory of action that bases the theory of organizing. In it, the action has a retrospective and selective basis. The selectively accumulated experience is also selectively triggered in the context of the action. However, this selectivity does not respond to deliberate and intentional management, as elaborated in Ann Swidler's proposition (1986), but rather to an improvisational process. In institutional theory, the agency is delimited by processes of another order. The taken-for-granted character of institutionalized action relates to the irreflective behavior guided by cognitively internalized content. Although they may seem opposed, it is necessary to consider the origin of the argument of Weick (1979) so that it can be appreciated the possibility of integrating the two conceptions.

Working in the tradition of social psychology, the focus of the author's theoretical formulation is cognition. By taking the organizational actor as a reference, he discusses the cognitive constitution of reality. Therefore, the assertion that the organization and the environment are created through enactments should not be interpreted literally, but relationally (EMIRBAYER, 1997). From an individual standpoint, the organization and the environment exist only insofar as they are perceived. The theory of organizing is a theoretical formulation focused on the investigation of how this perception occurs, affecting the forms through which reality is apprehended and, consequently, the spectrum of actions and possible interpretations that results from it.

Additionally, Weick himself (1979) acknowledged that adequate consideration of the effects of the institutional environment on organizing would benefit the approach (WEICK, SUTCLIFFE and OBSTFELD, 2005). In analytical terms, arranging the institutional environment as something implicit in the clues extracted from the environment or in the content accumulated cognitively by the organizational actors would result in an analytical reductionism or, more importantly, in an overemphasis of the agency. Being prior to the symbolic constitution of the actors themselves, given that they endowed with historicity, regulatory and normative institutional elements (SCOTT, 1995; HWANG and COLYVAS, 2011; MUTCH, 2017) tend to delimit the very situation in which the organizing takes place. This does not imply accepting the structural determinism by which the new institutionalism was criticized (HIRSCH and LOUNSBURRY, 1997), but to reposition the institutional argument while situating the argument of organizing.

The second point of tension between the approaches is the relationship between organization and the environment. In organizing, the constitution of the environment is elaborated from the individual who experiences it. The environment is phenomenologically approached, that is, in the way the attention sees it. More than a coherent and presumed whole, what

one has is an expanded set of possibilities for selective seizure. The organizational actor, consciously or improvising in the face of uncertainties, participates in the fractured process of constitution of what will come to understand as an environment.

In the new institutionalism, the distinction between organization and environment has gained notoriety, especially as a result of the organizational field concept. As argued by many authors, this distinction became more striking by the type of empirical investigation that the division of academic work relegated to the theorists of organizations than as a result of the theoretical foundations of the discipline (WEBER and GLYNN, 2006; SUDDABY, 2015; BARLEY, 2008). As highlighted by Czarniawska (2014), the concept of organizational field deals with the symbolic connections that exist between organizations that work in the same segment. In this sense, what we have are symbolic elements that are inscribed in these organizations independently of their immediate boundaries. Accepting that the symbolic manifests itself individually and collectively through processes of interpretation and signification, the apparent tension between the two approaches seems to dissolve.

FOR AN INTEGRATION: THE SENSES, THE INSTITUTIONS AND THE ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZING

Based on these reflections and inspired by works devoted to similar objectives, it is understood that the integrative effort between the organizing theory and the institutional thinking in organizations makes it possible to reposition the individuals in explaining institutions and situate organizational processes in contexts where multiple institutional orders coexist, more often, contradictorily (SEO and CREED, 2002). We understand that organizing (WEICK, 1979) brings together theoretical assumptions useful to the task of re-engaging institutional theory in organizations in space and time where they exist. At the same time, we think that the institutionalist research agenda proposed by Zucker (1988) gathers appropriate formulations so that we can situate the organization within the framework of territorially situated formal and informal collectivities.

Assuming that institutions are "typifications and shared rules that identify categories of social actors and their appropriate relationships or activities" (BARLEY and TOLBERT, 1997), it is understood that situations, identities and social relations are sustained not only in attention to macro-institutional factors, but also and especially influenced by the historicity immanent to the daily practical activities and the meanings attributed to these elements. In addition to comprehensive institutional pressures, other relevant factors are the "renitent social relations" (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006, p. 226) historically accumulated.

Institutions of broad reach such as family, market, and religion only become meaningful when practiced. This process is strictly influenced by immediate contextual factors, which means that there is ample scope for variation in the performance of the same institution (BINDER, 2007). The institutions do not exist independently of the interactions that give them "strength and meaning" (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006, p. 227). As highlighted by Barley and Tolbert (1997, p. 97), "Social actions may vary in their particularities, but to be interpretable, their contours must conform to the naturalized assumptions about the appropriate activities and interactions to Different classes of actors".

Since the institutional plurality is a source of contradictory pressures, conflicts, contradictions, and disagreements are generated in organizations and individuals seeking to carry out their roles in actions (JARZABKOWSKI, MATTHIESEN and VAN DE VEN, 2009). Thus, the process of searching for senses is triggered. Faced with uncertainties and ambiguities, the actors rely on both habits and memories and their projective capacity (EMIRBAYER and MISCHE, 1998) to extract useful clues to their attempts to guarantee some predictability to situations, which Weick (1979) denominated enactment.

Weber and Glynn (2006) proposed an integrative approach of institutions and the creation of meaning, arguing that this integration is fertile so that the idea of institutions as internalized cognitive constraints can be enlarged, adding to it the ability of institutions to produce meanings and action. It can be said that the approach of sensemaking, although it has its origins in the work where Weick (1979) presented the idea of organizing, constituted a domain of its own from the work of authors who emphasized the role of language in the constitution of social (WEICK, 1995; CORNELISSEN and CLARKE, 2010; MAITLIS and CHRISTIANSON, 2014). Along this trajectory, some initial formulations of Weick (1979) lost centrality in the works, as in the case of the triad enactment-selection-retention.

In the proposed integration, the institutions are not taken as inert content readily disposed to hybridization, as formulated in some works (PACHE and SANTOS, 2013; BATTILANA and DORADO, 2010; MAIR, MAYER and LUTZ, 2015) based on the approach of institutional logics (THORNTON, OCASIO and LOUNSBURY, 2012). The formation of the action is not based mostly on the

own repertoires of previously typified social interactions, as formulated in the inhabited institutions (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006). Thus, there is a form of recursion between action and structure (MACHADO-DA-SILVA, FONSECA and CRUBELLATE, 2005; BARLEY and TOLBERT, 1997). This recursion, however, cannot be explained without considering the distinct character observed between the social structure and the capacity of action of the organizational actors (MUTCH, 2017).

It is the theorization of the action proposed by Weick (1979) that allows the integration effort here made to distinguish itself from the formulation observed in the approaches of the institutional logics (THORNTON, OCASIO and LOUNSBURRY, 2012) and the inhabited institutions (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006). What distinguishes the action of the social structure is the interpretative element, the interpretative action. However, more than highlighting its role (MACHADO-DA-SILVA, FONSECA and CRUBELLATE, 2005), the triad enactment-selection-retention can help to explain its functioning. Additionally, the improvisational and retrospective elements present in the author's proposal represent, at one time, a distancing from stereotyped conceptions of the organizational actors and the consideration of history, respectively. In analytical terms, it is the possibility of conducting diachronic analyses that are presented through the consideration of the historicity of the interpreted institutions (SUDDABY, FOSTER, MILLS et al., 2013), as revealed by the analytical emphasis attributed to relationship between the history and the formation of the biography of the organizational actors (WRIGHT-MILLS, 1975).

As an illustration, a brief analytical exercise can be carried out taking as an example the process of creating a rural settlement of agrarian reform in a rural neighborhood located in the municipality of Sete Barras-SP, in the Vale do Rio Ribeira do Iguape (GRIGOLETTO, 2018). Presenting a complex social formation where, despite the predominance of squatters occupying the place since the beginning of the TWENTIETH century, there are also capitalized agricultural producers, the neighborhood was the backdrop of land conflicts that lasted from 60's until the end of the 90's. In the mid-2000, the precedence of squatters on farmers claiming ownership of the area was recognized through the creation of a sustainable development project, a rural settlement modality designed for actions of land reordering carried out in environmental protection areas (BERNINI, 2005, 2009; MARINHO, 2006).

The creation of the settlement, more than a simple state intervention, also represented the return of the squatters to the area from which they had been evicted twice during the long process of conflict that settled there. For this reason, the relocation of families in the areas where their ancestors had settled was considered a priority. The arrival of new social actors in the neighborhood during the conflictual process, mostly rural workers in search of a space of life and work, made, at one time, the task more complex. Although the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) has its own guidelines for the division of plots in rural settlements, the postulants themselves, animated by neighborhood leaders who then organized themselves into a community association and which, curiously, had not been harmed by the conflict directly, were supported in a categorization system to ensure proper legitimacy to the process.

Two collectively forged categories guided the creation of the settlement: the historical and the actuating ones. While the former referred to the families of squatters whose ancestors had occupied the neighborhood initially, the second was used in the representation of those postulants who did not have a direct connection with the land conflict in their origins. Through these definitions, the originating squatters, in the cases where this outcome reflected their will, were able to reoccupy the areas where their ancestors had lived. The remaining areas, then, could be divided among those families who, engaged in the struggle for land, had remained active throughout the negotiation process with the postulant farmers, the judicial organs and the INCRA.

The solution was achieved through categorization (DOUGLAS, 1986). However, in the end, the formal rules of INCRA, even if encountering the contingency of the organ servants that acted directly in the place, revealing the enactment of the objected performance of memories of the land conflict in the neighborhood. And so, by being held after more than four decades, those memories projected the terms of the negotiation that allowed the minimization of ambiguity and misunderstanding (WEICK, 1979) and configured in place from institutional contradictions (SEO and CREED, 2002) configured by the overlap of two institutionally planned land regimes: possession and formal ownership.

More than the lack of a homogeneous institutional framework, as in the case of mature organizational fields, which could provide the action guides for the creation of the settlement, the formal rules of INCRA were deliberately ignored in favor of categorization forged from the memory of the conflict. We believe that the consideration of the meeting between the

bureaucratic and community institutional logics could yield useful analyses, just as an examination of how the squatters and the leadership "inhabited" the bureaucratic procedures. These pathways, however, did not congregate the analytical elements offered by the triad enactment-selection-retention, hindering the realization of diachronic analysis.

It is understood that some studies that have proposed to use variants of institutional thinking in organizations to describe and explain organizational phenomena observed in the so-called developing countries or, as adopted here, in the Global South, ended up incurring in some order of theoretical or argumentative inadequacy, generating partial or selective explanations (MARTÍ and MAIR, 2009; MCKAGUE, ZIESTMA and OLIVER, 2015). We want to argue that, given the partial manifestation of what is understood in classical sociology as the most expressive vectors of the modernization process (secularization and the growing division of work), the enlargement of the sphere of instrumental rationality under the social world has not been observed in the aforementioned countries in the same way as in the case of so-called developed countries or, as recommended here, the Global North.

The demographic relevance of social segments such as family farming in developing countries, which expresses ruptures and continuities with peasantry (WANDERLEY, 2003), a category used in the analysis of social processes observed in the rural world, it evidences the argument. Despite the development of capitalism in the rural areas, as revealed by the productive modernization and the replacement of the senses of rural-urban relations (WANDERLEY, 2009), in many spaces and places the formal organization, as a characteristic structural form of the processes of rationalization of the productive sphere, remained predominantly absent until the mid-1990 years.

More recently, after the sustained experimentation of a set of public policies aimed at family farming, it was observed an emergence of cooperatives and associations in the Brazilian rural world. This emergence, however, did not mean the configuration of an organizational field of family farming, not at least considered the emergence of this concept about sets of organizations operating in similar segments where the strong institutionalization of rationalized myths would appear as a source of legitimacy (MEYER and ROWAN, 1977). Thus, more than an alleged tendency to homogenization motivated by common institutionalized beliefs, what we have is the maintenance of several symbolic referential, often articulated based on territories around which they articulate different identities: settlers, quilombolas, riverlets, caiçaras, among others.

The organization understood as distributed organizational processes made from social interactions with a specific purpose, is informed and, therefore, delimited by regulatory institutions (SCOTT, 1995) and by the social position of the actors organizational (BOURDIEU, 2007; BATTILANA, 2006; SUDDABY, VIALE and GENDRON, 2016). The action remains, however, a space of improvisation based not only on structural attributes, but in interpretative processes of a retrospective nature that put these structural attributes in perspective in the face of memory and, therefore, of history (SUDDABY, FOSTER, MILLS et al., 2013), as illustrated from the case of the rural neighborhood described.

Suddaby, Foster, Mills et al. (2013, p. 101) argue that "the institutional theory contains in its scope a central assumption, although not articulated, of theory and historical method." For the authors, in the recent period, some neoinstitutionalist works began to treat history as "a series of relatively constant underlying conditions, and that express themselves in a relatively consistent way over time and space" (SUDDABY, FOSTER, MILLS et al., 2013, p. 107). In addition to preventing the examination of the central role assumed by interpretations and narratives, they argue that this "rational-deductive" treatment of history has as a consequence a "tendency to functionalism" (SUDDABY, FOSTER, MILLS et al., 2013, p. 108). Finally, they argue that institutions should be understood as historical processes sustained by the interaction of individuals, "results of past events and interpretation of them" (SUDDABY, FOSTER, MILLS et al., 2013, p. 111).

It is believed that the taking of the theory of organizing as a micro-foundation for institutional thinking in organizations meets the argumentation of the authors, especially by the processual view of the organization adopted in the approach and, on the other part, by the inherent character that the consideration of history assumes in its formulation, as revealed by the attention given to retrospective interpretations in the formation of action in the present. The institutions, as historical processes, delineate the possibilities of enactment, informing the action of organizational actors in the face of the complexity of the social reality.

Thus, in theoretical terms, the proposed integration articulates the theory of action inscribed in the theory of organizing with the view of institutions as shared rules and typifications selectively triggered in the process of assigning meanings to organizational structures. At the same time, it recovers the institutional emphasis on the relationship between organizations

and meanings (SUDDABY, 2015) and broadens the view of the institutions as proposed by Weber and Glynn (2006). Thus, it is possible to consider both the compliance with rules and typifications and the possibility of triggering these in favor of changes in organizational practices. Taking the collectivities as spaces of action for the dissolution of social dilemmas in the context of social entropy (ZUCKER, 1988) or, in Weickian terms, of ambiguity and equivocality (WEICK, 1979), the integration presented maintains the necessary flexibility for the identification of changes and different visions about the same topic.

Methodologically, the formulation also appears as an analytical lens suitable for analyzing reports captured in conversational interviews and several ethnographic observations. Thus, it can be examined how different actors are inserted in the "renitent social relations" (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006, p. 226) historically accumulated, so that the personal biographies can be interpreted concerning the organizational trajectory (WRIGHT-MILLS, 1975). The selection and retention mechanisms contained in the analytical triad allow personal memory to be analyzed as the history of history, in consonance with claims for the reintroduction of history in institutional studies (MUTCH, 2017) and organization theory (SUDDABY, FOSTER, MILLS et al., 2013; SUDDABY, 2016).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

A systematic and organized resumption of some of the different strands of analysis articulated around organizational institutionalism was sought. Echoing the plurality observed in the field of administration and organizational theory, the studies carried out in the current context present heterogeneous character in terms of ontological and epistemological assumptions, levels of analysis and emphasis adopted. While the multiplicity of visions characterizes it, we identified an absolute consensus in the diagnosis that this theoretical body lacks a theory of action that allows the overcoming of structural determinism while avoiding voluntaristic conceptions of organizational actors (MUTCH, 2017; SUDDABY, 2010; SUDDABY, FOSTER, MILLS et al., 2013). Thus, we propose the theory of organizing (WEICK, 1979) as a micro foundation of institutional and organizational analysis.

The insertion of the triad enactment-selection-retention as the reference of analysis fulfills a dual role. Methodologically, it provides references for analysis of conversational interviews and ethnographic observations. Theoretically, its retrospective orientation helps the challenge of understanding how collective and individual institutional memories (DOUGLAS, 1986) relate, as well as the implications of this relationship on the formation of action. Thus, it enables the investigation of the maintenance of the organization carried out in a distributed manner and strongly influenced by roles that extrapolate the organizational structure.

By providing a more credible theory of action than the voluntary versions based on the idea of culture as a "toolkit" (SWIDLER, 1986; BINDER, 2007; SHARMA and GOOD, 2013), the organizing allows to consider the improvisational character that often marks the formation of action, primarily when it is understood the coexistence of different institutional orders (FRIEDLAND and ALFORD, 1991; THORNTON, OCASIO and LOUNSBURRY, 2012) that, existing contradictorily (SEO and CREED, 2002), promote countless possibilities of action and interpretation. However, unlike the interactionist-symbolic version, where the action is the product of the interpretation, in organizing the enactment forge the bases on which the interpretative processes of selection and retention occur. Informed by local and extra locally institutionalized typifications and categorizations, this interpretation is also influenced by content accumulated along biographical trajectories that keep a steady correspondence with the territory and the form of retention resulting from multiple triadic processes (enactment-selection-retention).

More than formal occupations or occupations based on heavily institutionalized roles, semi-professionalized social categories, such as the development agent (MENDONÇA and ALVES, 2012), or territorially articulated, such as the peasant and the Caiçara, the extractivist and the settled, are identity constructions. In each place, they gain meaning through various historical processes, variously manifesting themselves. Understanding how history is accumulated as individual and collective memory (DOUGLAS, 1986), influencing the formation of action and the signification of social relations in institutionally contradictory environments (SEO and CREED, 2002), is something necessary for the organizational analysis to account for the institutional complexity that characterizes countries such as Brazil.

In the so-called developing countries, what was understood in social theory as an expression of the modernization process – secularization and division of work, mainly – was partially observed. Thus, the coexistence of institutional orders such as the market, the family and the community (FRIEDLAND and ALFORD, 1991; THORNTON, OCASIO and LOUNSBURY, 2012), in their contradictory characters (SEO and CREED, 2002), places in the same spaces different formal collectivities guided by different institutionalized categories and typifications, such as in the case of governmental organizations and companies, on the one hand, and groups of family farmers and autonomous collectives, on the other.

The contradictory character of the institutional plurality (SEO and CREED, 2002) removes the possibility of free management of cultural repertoires, as advocated in some institutionalist works (SHARMA and GOOD, 2013). Although the works of the inhabited institutions (HALLETT and VENTRESCA, 2006) reveal the varied character of the meanings attributed locally to the institutions, explaining their different manifestations, it remains to understand how the processes of constructing these meanings.

We seek to demonstrate how understanding the relationship between action and interpretation through the concept of enactment can provide a deeper understanding of how actors, i.e., individuals and organizations, respond to the ambiguity (WEICK, 1979) arising from the multiplicity of institutional orders (FRIEDLAND and ALFORD, 1991; THORNTON, OCASIO and LOUNSBURRY, 2012) that exist contradictorily (SEO and CREED, 2002). Thus, we demonstrate that the processes of enactment do not take on an emptiness since they are situated concerning historically consolidated structural attributes. At the same time, we seek to guarantee the institutional analysis the analytical flexibility to understand processes of variation and change through the consideration of the improvisational character of the action, as formulated by Weick (1979).

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