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The Material and Visual Basis of Institutions

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Institutions have a ‘relative permanence of a distinctly social sort’ (Hughes, 1936: 180), which means that they are resilient social structures that provide stability and meaning to social life (Scott, 2003, 2008), influencing which organizational practices and arrangements are utilized and with what consequences (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008). One of the most basic assumptions of institutional theory is that this relative permanence is achieved through sedimentation in a sign system that is a central resource for the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Institutional scholars have until now focused on verbal language as the primary sign system and on ‘linguistic artifacts’ (Czarniawska, 2008; Zucker, 1977), which does not provide a theoretical account of how other sign systems – such as the material or visual and their specific modes – create artifacts and representations, interact with ideation and, ultimately, lead to durable institutional effects. When beliefs and ideas are made exterior and objective, they endure to influence practices and arrangements (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Zucker, 1977). Materiality and visuality are crucial to institutions and institutional processes. On the one hand, they constitute ‘embodied’ aspects of all experiences, including the creation and interpretation of signs and institutions, which are bound to material properties of the sensory apparatus, such as vocal chords, retinas, the brain, etc. On the other hand, materiality and visuality are central media by which ideas, beliefs and values are expressed, shared, and stored to endure over time and across space.

Materiality is the reality of our everyday life, grounded in our senses and the material properties of objects, which appear already objectified and ordered by means of vocabulary. Thus, ‘language marks the coordinates of my life in society and fills that life with meaningful objects’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 22). Even though Berger and Luckmann recognize the crucial role of objects, they highlight them *vis-à-vis* (verbal) language. Material objects, however, preceded verbal and written texts and ‘even literature societies recorded their aspirations and hopes not only in writing but in things’ (MacGregor, 2010: xvi). Yet,

‘materiality is an inherently polysemic concept and ... different ways of conceiving materiality matter differently in practice’ (Carlile, Nicolini, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2013: 4). In short, matter has consequences. Materiality shapes not only which ideas, beliefs and values endure or decay over time, but also how they move across space. Visuality is less concerned with the actual physicality – the haptic properties – of artifacts, but instead focuses on the way material and immaterial objects are composed spatially, positioned with regard to the ‘gaze’ of audiences, and how aspects of, for instance, social distance, abstraction, color, or perspective are reflected in core constructs and processes to influence processes of meaning-making (Meyer, Höllerer, Jancsary & van Leeuwen, 2013).

Although the social construction of institutions is tethered to the material world and relies on visual representations of the latter, the material and visual basis of institutions appears to be taken for granted within institutional theory. Few institutional scholars consider the material and visual representations by which humans create, stabilize, and reproduce the understandings and meanings that comprise institutions and influence institutional processes (for exceptions see, e.g., Jones, Boxenbaum & Anthony, 2013; Meyer et al., 2013). The relatively stable, shared understandings and meanings of institutions provide the contextual dynamics for organizations (Greenwood et al., 2008), circumscribing what is legitimate for whom (Suchman, 1995), which institutional logics are utilized when and by whom (Dunn & Jones, 2010; Meyer & Höllerer, 2010; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012), how ideas are theorized (Strang & Meyer, 1993) and translated as they move across contexts (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Wedlin & Sahlin, Chapter 18 this volume) and which identity is salient and invoked (Glynn, Chapter 9 this volume; Jones & Massa, 2013; Kraatz & Block, Chapter 20 this volume). Institutional scholarship has rich, extensive theorizing about, and empirical studies on, these core constructs and processes; yet, how the material and visual underpin

institutions and institutional processes by enabling shared meanings that move across space and endure over time, remains under-explored and under-theorized.

In this chapter, we first explore materiality and visuality in general. Subsequently, we examine how material and visual properties of artifacts influence core institutional constructs and processes such as legitimacy, institutional logics, theorization, translation, and identity. Finally, we present our conclusions and offer potential directions for future research.

THE MATERIAL AND VISUAL AS BASIS AND EXPRESSION OF INSTITUTIONS

Institutional scholars have privileged the role of cognition (e.g., ideas and beliefs) and culture (e.g., shared meanings) in creating, sustaining and changing institutions (DiMaggio, 1997; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Selznick, 1996). This cognitive focus is grounded in Weber, who provided a ‘common start’ for both North American and Scandinavian institutionalism (Czarniawska-Joerges & Joerges, 1990: 3) and likened ideas to ‘switchmen’, determining ‘the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest’ (Weber, 1958 [1946]: 280).

Institutions are sedimentations of social meanings, or, as Berger and Kellner (1981: 31) have put it: ‘a crystallization of meanings in objective form’. This sedimentation, or crystallization, of meaning is accomplished in socially shared sign systems. Berger and Luckmann built upon Weber’s and Schütz’s insights that bestow verbal language – vocal and written signs – preeminent relevance in modern societies. For Berger and Luckmann (1967), institutions primarily rely on linguistic signification. We argue here that they, and the institutional research that follows them, are preoccupied with cognitive aspects of institutions and interpretation processes, and with linguistic artifacts. Thus, they have considerably underestimated other sign systems, especially material or visual significations, in their capacity to organize, communicate, store, and transmit social meanings.

The ability to signify in shared sign systems is more than an add-on to interpretation processes. It gives objectifications the power to transcend the here and now and is central to the durability and transferability of institutions across time and space. But how the properties and features of the different sign systems, especially those other than verbal language, may impact on meanings and interpretation processes, as well as on the institutional architecture of a field or society, have been largely ignored. We argue that the workings of different modes of signification must be disentangled, if we are to understand their interplay and deepen our understanding of institutions.

Institutions and Materiality: Making Ideas and Meanings Durable and Transferable

Our knowledge and experience of the world is fundamentally material; it is mediated through our bodily senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste – and the properties of objects (e.g., weight, texture, strength, rates of decay etc.). Even when institutional scholars acknowledge the material world, they place it in the service of cognitive symbolic systems. Scott (2003: 883) elaborates symbolic systems by discussing how materials enable ideas to endure and travel: ‘[W]riting on stone or clay is preserved longer than that on papyrus, and the latter outlasts paper, but paper can be readily transported and more widely distributed.’ Material objects are not simply institutional carriers, but also boundary objects that are ‘flexibly interpretative’ to enable coordination among diverse social actors (Star & Griesemer, 1989; Bechky, 2003), transfer knowledge across groups (Carlile, 2002) and generate locally situated meanings from abstract knowledge (Thurk & Fine, 2003).

The interplay of human and material was first illuminated by Durkheim (1951: 313): ‘[I]t is not true that society is made up only of individuals; it also includes material things, which play an essential role in the common life’ because [s]ocial life...is...crystalized...and fixed on material support...and acts upon us from without’. Material artifacts enable societies

to stabilize and endure over time because when a social fact is made material, i.e., becomes durable, it is no longer tied to individuals and thus it can exist across time and space. Despite the vital role of material objects, sociologists neglected materiality because they ‘would rather deal with people than with things’ (Berger, 1963: 1). Material objects, however, help to anchor and reproduce the culture’s ideas and meanings, constraining their drift and flux; thus, materiality stabilizes and enables the institutionalization of shared ideas, values, beliefs and meanings.

Scholars of Science and Technology Studies (STS) and material culture have elaborated on Durkheim’s core insight that society is mutually constituted of things and people; this insight can be applied usefully to institutions. For example, Jones, Boxenbaum and Anthony (2013) extended our understanding of institutional logics by applying insights from anthropology (e.g., exchange theory, consumption) and Science and Technology Studies (e.g., Social Construction of Technology [SCOT], Actor-Network-Theory [ANT] and textuality). Just as an object has stable networks of relations (e.g., a functioning ship has oars, sails, crew, water, wind) (Law, 2002: 95), institutions, to have relative permanence, depend upon the stable relations among ideas, people and material artifacts. A religion has a deity and beliefs, worshippers and clergy, as well as special buildings and objects. This relationality creates polyvocality and ‘enables different meanings or uses’ for material objects (McDonnell, 2010: 1806). By examining these relational networks, we reveal a material vocabulary, which offers important insights into the foundations of institutions and institutional dynamics (e.g., change and stability) (Jones & Vaara, 2014).

Jones, Anthony and Boxenbaum (2013) develop a framework for analyzing materiality by examining how two core dimensions of materials – their durability and transferability – influence institutional processes. Durability is a property of material artifacts (e.g., tensile and compressive strength, or rates of decay, such that reinforced concrete has stronger tensile and

compressive strength and lower rates of decay than wood), but also beliefs about the durability of materials, which may be valid or invalid (e.g., e-mails are ephemeral until government agencies use them to trace our communication history). The configuration and use of material objects shape social action (Dourish & Mazmanian, 2013). The more durable material artifacts such as buildings are, the more likely they will ‘give structure to social institutions, durability to social networks, [and] persistence to behavior patterns’ (Gieryn, 2002: 35). Durability is not static; material artifacts not only decay, but they are also reinterpreted over time and across cultural contexts. An AIDS campaign in Ghana found that AIDS prevention ads, such as billboard or bus stops, were routinely used for either hawking goods or pasted over with other posters, such that the legibility and visuality of the message was completely disrupted. In other cases, the ads had eroded so words and images had decayed, fundamentally altering the meaning of the original ad (McDonnell, 2010). Thus, the durability or decay of materials can alter ideas and their communication.

Transferability refers to the portability or mobility of material artifacts, which influences how easily ideas are shared within groups and translated across different groups (Latour, 1986). For instance, contemporary communications systems depend on commonly shared material infrastructure that enhances transferability, such as transmitting towers for cell phones or fiber optic lines for computers, which if absent, cause communication to cease (Dourish & Mazmanian, 2013). Material artifacts, whether with the human body (e.g., voice, movement) or instruments and tools (e.g., pen, telescope or computer) provide the foundation upon, and the means by, which ideas, values and meanings are expressed, shared, transmitted and stored. The symbolic – ideas, beliefs and schemas – must be made material in order to signify (Friedland, 2001). In this way, the material is the foundation for institutions and shapes key institutional processes such as how acts and actors are legitimized, how identity is evoked

and invoked, which logics are stabilized and durable due to encoding into material form and how ideas are translated, theorized and transported across space and time.

Institutions and Visuality: Making the Invisible Visible

Following social semiotics (e.g., Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Meyer et al., 2013), the visual constitutes a specific sign system and semiotic mode. Akin to the grammar and vocabulary of verbal language, it has its own specific way of organizing, transmitting and storing meanings. As ‘a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning’ (Kress, 2010: 79), the visual mode is part of a group, field, or society’s shared stock of knowledge (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Jewitt, 2009; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; Schütz & Luckmann, 1973). It is, as are the institutions that it signifies, situated in particular social, cultural, and ideological contexts, which implies that different eras and cultures, but also different life-spheres and institutional orders, engender distinct forms of visual expression.

More systematically, semiotic modes and their sign systems can be distinguished with regard to how they distinctively accomplish signification, how they communicate and establish relationships between the actors involved and, finally, how they merge individual signs into a coherent message. Hence, the differences between, for example, the visual, the material and the verbal mode, essentially lie in the ways in which they organize information and meaning, address audiences, and connect meaningful elements within and across representations and broader discourses, rather than in the activation of particular sensory equipment. In this respect, the visual mode builds on specific characteristics that differentiate it from other sign systems, such as spatial ordering and composition (as opposed to the sequential and linear ordering of verbal language), holistic presentation and storage of information, immediacy of perception, the ability to strongly condense information, and a tendency towards polysemy. These characteristics make visual signification particularly suited to attracting attention (e.g., Bloch,

1995), creating involvement and/or detachment through an embodied perspective (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), eliciting or suppressing emotions (e.g., Raab, 2008; Schill, 2012), and making facticity claims by presenting its objects as ‘real’ (e.g., Mitchell, 1984). Moreover, visual signs grant access to those parts of a collective stock of knowledge that are primarily available in a non-discursive form.

Up until now, with very few exceptions, the reliance of institutions on sign systems other than verbal language, especially on visual signs, has, although regularly acknowledged (e.g., Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004; Phillips & Oswick, 2012) remained under-developed, and explicit elaborations are scarce. This is unfortunate, since the visual has become a dominant form of communication in society in general, and in and around organizations, in particular (e.g., Bell, Schroeder, & Warren, 2014; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Mitchell, 1994), to an extent that a ‘visual turn’ has been proclaimed by observers (e.g., Boehm, 1994; Fellmann, 1995; Mitchell, 1994). In addition, in modern Western culture, the visual mode is currently less scrutinized than, for example, the verbal mode (e.g., Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Meyer et al., 2013). McQuarrie and Phillips (2005; see also Messaris, 1997), for instance, stress that claims that could not be verbalized for cultural or even legal reasons can easily be visualized without invoking sanctions. This underlines the potential of visual images and artifacts, especially in instances of change or subtle resistance.

What has increased is not only the quantity of images, in a way that we are constantly flooded with visual information in everyday life, but also the quality of what can be depicted, and how malleable visual signs have become. For instance, means for visual composition and manipulation have become ever more accessible to broader parts of society, and the Internet as a platform has furthered the widespread dissemination of ‘amateur’ visual discourse (e.g., Kress, 2010). When Berger and Luckmann first wrote their treatise in 1966, verbal discourse

was certainly dominant; however, it is time to update institutional theory in accordance with more recent developments of today. As Meyer et al. (2013) emphasize, this may well change the way in which we understand such central topics as processes of institutionalization, legitimation, theorization and translation, institutional logics or responses to institutional complexity.

LEGITIMACY AND LEGITIMATION THROUGH MATERIAL FORM AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION

Legitimacy is a central concept in institutional thinking, dating back to Weber (1978 [1922]) and Berger and Luckmann (1967), who argue that legitimation is the process of explaining and justifying institutions: Legitimation ‘explains the institutional order by ascribing cognitive validity to its objectivated meanings. Legitimation justifies the institutional order by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives’ (1967: 111). Similarly, institutional theory has defined the concept of legitimacy *as the perceived appropriateness of an organization to a social system in terms of rules, values, norms, and definitions* (Deephouse, Bundy, Plunkett Tost, & Suchman, Chapter 1 this volume). Aldrich and Fiol (1994) differentiated between cognitive and socio-political legitimacy, whereas Suchman (1995) distinguishes between three different forms of legitimacy: Pragmatic legitimacy basically rests on evidence of usefulness; moral legitimacy requires integration with accepted norms and values. Cognitive legitimacy demands normalization through assimilation into established and taken-for-granted symbolic systems. More recently, an elaborate body of literature has focused on how legitimacy is gained and lost from a more agentic and processual perspective. Such research has focused on legitimacy judgements (e.g., Bitektine, 2011), legitimation strategies such as authorization, rationalization, moralization, narrativization, or normalization (e.g., Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999).

As ‘second-order objectivation of meaning’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 110), legitimation may be built upon the use of any conventionalized shared sign system. However, by accepting that the ‘edifice of legitimation is built upon [verbal] language’ (1967: 82), institutional research has hitherto failed to acknowledge how each of the forms of legitimacy can be invoked through material and visual display.

Materiality

Institutions are materially anchored (Pinch, 2008), even though Berger and Luckmann focus on institutions as being legitimized – that is explained and justified – through language. We experience institutions daily through objects such as buildings (homes, schools, offices) and work implements (computers to surgical knives). Thus, our first experiences of the appropriateness and desirability of institutions is pragmatic legitimacy: being nourished, sheltered and loved. Normative legitimacy is anchored and learned materially: whether to convey food to our mouths with forks or hands and which clothing to wear for what occasions. Cognitive legitimacy is established through material objects that teach and integrate us into established sign systems, such as books that justify and explain institutions. Our argument is that the materiality of objects or practices, specifically its durability and transferability, shapes our perceptions of legitimacy and influences legitimation processes.

By materializing ideas, it heightens their perceived facticity; they are experienced as exterior and objective. For example, religious institutions materialize the ineffable God and spirit with icons; they materialize aspirations to reach the unseen and unknowable in spires for Christian churches or minarets for Muslim mosques, which not only act symbolically as conduits between heaven and earth, but also as boundary markers that locate religious buildings for adherents and the community to gather. Humans believe that materiality adds power and legitimacy to prophetic or protective words; they transcribe these words into objects and wear

them to gain ‘safe passage through a precarious world’ (Skemer, 2006). When we perceive material objects as illegitimate, we strike at them, such as burning books deemed pornographic, destroying cultural artifacts associated with a rival legal and moral order, or banning icons to reinforce religious beliefs such as in the Protestant Reformation. By destroying the materiality of the object, we may inhibit the capacity of an idea to endure and may precipitate institutional change in belief and normative systems. Psychological experiments demonstrate that when people write down their evaluative ideas and then physically tear up their notes, they more easily alter their opinions than those who only imagine ripping up their notes (Briñol, Gascó, Petty, & Horcajo, 2013). Material culture, such as museums and building preservation, is premised on the idea that culture and institutions are irrevocably lost when the durability of material artifacts is altered or destroyed (Barthel, 1996; MacGregor, 2010). Materiality offers unique perspectives into cultural meaning and institutions beyond linguistic explanation (Hicks & Beaudry, 2010).

When material objects and practices can be transferred to other actors, they are more likely to become standards that shape the future. Certification contests, material mimicry and camouflage are three examples of material legitimation strategies. Certification authenticates that verbal or written claims correspond to material realities (e.g., the company that claims to sell organic fruits engages in the material practices of organic farming, the signature corresponds to the person signing the document). *Certification* contests are mechanisms that demonstrate the pragmatic legitimacy of material objects and their properties by authenticating and comparing claims of superior performance. For example, when cars were a new invention, the superiority of cars, as compared to horses, in terms of speed and durability had to be demonstrated. Once the superiority of cars was accepted, the features of cars that demonstrated enhanced durability such as speed and hill climbing, were compared among cars to demonstrate superiority (Rao, 1994). By comparing material objects and their features, those material

objects that win certification contests are more likely to be adopted by competitors and consumers to become industry standards.

Material *mimicry* legitimates networks of people, practices and objects, which not only stabilizes understandings, but also generates normative legitimacy for new practices and objects in new industries. In the early film industry, the industry clientele were poor immigrants. To shift normative understandings of the film industry from illegitimate to legitimate, film entrepreneurs imitated the Broadway Theater's network of people (actors), ideas (stories with narratives and genres), and material and visual forms (ostentatious theaters with porticos, plush red seats and carpets). By doing so, they destabilized the normative understanding of the industry as appealing to poor immigrants who viewed films through peepboxes in warehouses and stabilized the meaning of the new film industry as a form of fine arts that is for the upper class (Jones, 2001).

Entrepreneurs may also *camouflage* – assimilating the new into the familiar – to gain cognitive legitimacy by enhancing comprehension and familiarity. For example, Edison camouflaged his electric lightbulb into the familiar forms of the gas lamp (shape of the bulb, flickering light), imitating its visual appearance and surface features to gain acceptance for the early electricity industry (Hargadon & Douglas, 2001). These surface features were taken-for-granted material and visual forms, but had completely distinct infrastructural and institutional foundations. Edison needed to 'overcome the institutions – the existing understandings and patterns of action – that had, over the fifty years of the gas industry's existence, accreted around these fundamental physical properties and now maintained the stability of the gas system' (Hargadon & Douglas, 2001: 492). These three forms of material legitimation are non-verbal explanations and justifications that legitimate new actors and practices. Since institutions are complex and materiality is both layered and relational (Dourish & Mazmanian, 2013), the coherence among material elements may be as important as their durability and transferability

in influencing which type of legitimacy (e.g., pragmatic, cognitive, normative) is conferred and which legitimation strategies are most successful. A critical question for future research is how relations among material artifacts and institutional contexts influence forms of legitimacy and legitimation strategies.

Visuality

Due to their ability to provide seemingly ‘factual’ evidence (e.g., Graves, Flesher, & Jordan, 1996), specific visual forms, like photographs or technical sketches, are highly conducive to enhancing what Berger and Luckmann (1967: 112) call ‘incipient legitimation’ – the most basic assertion that this is how things are, which in turn forms the foundation for self-evidence and taken-for-grantedness. Photographs, in particular, may hide persuasive statements behind a ‘veil’ of ‘objective and neutral’ representation (e.g., Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Mitchell, 1994), for instance in visualizations found in corporate reports (e.g., Preston, Wright, & Young, 1996). The depiction of prestigious figures (e.g., global, local, and/or historical ‘heroes’), symbols (e.g., the section sign ‘§’ to connote the power of the law, the Red Cross, or the Statue of Liberty), renowned experts (see Höllerer, Meyer, Jancsary, & Vettori, 2013), or even God and religious figures (see Carruthers & Espeland, 1991, Quattrone, 2004) embeds the idea in holistic compositions that provide non-verbal justifications and enhance the appeal of, for example, novel organizational practices. Consequently, it legitimizes both practice and organization. A normative fit is exhibited, for instance, through the material and visual aspects of dress codes (e.g., Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993). Due to their ability to connect divergent elements inconspicuously in spatial arrangements, visuals can create ‘legitimacy spillovers’ (e.g., Benford & Snow, 2000; Haack, Pfarrer, & Scherer, 2014; Kostova & Zaheer, 1999) from familiar, socially shared and already institutionalized values and ideologies (e.g., modern working standards) to the new and/or potentially problematic (e.g., new employment laws),

and are, therefore, uniquely suited to increase the familiarity and comprehensibility required for cognitive legitimacy (e.g., Höllerer et al., 2013; Rämö, 2011). The same is true for illegitimacy spillovers, when objects are brought in relation to illegitimate objects or practices (e.g., de-legitimizing abortion practices through horrifying imagery) (e.g., Lefsrud, Graves, & Phillips, 2013).

More recently, attempts have been made to connect legitimacy to affection and aesthetics. Meyer et al. (2013) suggest that *aesthetic* legitimacy builds on a shared ‘aesthetic code’ (Gagliardi, 2006) of a community or field, and specifies the distinction between the ‘beautiful’ and the ‘ugly’, when and how the ‘triad of the good, the true, and the beautiful’ unfolds, and how this influences legitimacy judgements (Bitektine, 2011; Tost, 2011) across different institutional orders. Haack et al. (2014) have suggested that legitimacy also has an *affective* component. Both aesthetic and affective legitimacy build, to a certain degree, on emotionality. Visuals are particularly well suited for eliciting emotional reactions (e.g., Phillips, 2000; Schill, 2012; Scott & Vargas, 2007). Since visual communication transmits information with a high degree of immediacy (e.g., Mitchell, 1984; see also Rowley-Jolivet, 2004; Smith and Taffler, 1996), affective and aesthetic evaluations based on visuals become salient before verbal text has been processed and more elaborate pragmatic, normative, or cognitive evaluations set in. Aesthetic and affective appeal has been found to be particularly relevant when dominant models have not yet been established (e.g., Eisenmann, 2013).

Although most research on legitimation strategies (e.g., Lefsrud and Meyer, 2012; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Vaara & Tienari, 2008) acknowledges that discourse includes multiple sign systems, only very few studies actually go beyond verbal strategies to include visual rhetorics. Visual images and artifacts can support *authorization* (legitimation through tradition, law, or persons or organizations upon whom or which authority of some kind has been bestowed) by visually invoking proximity to authorities, and experts, such as, for instance,

photographs of politicians, activists, or experts that provide powerful testimonials and signal external approval (e.g., Höllerer et al., 2013). Visual images also enhance *rationalization* (legitimation through reference to utility) by projecting detachment and objectivity (for instance, by removing perspective and affective style or by presenting diagrams and charts). They could employ cosmological rhetoric (e.g., Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) by claiming facticity through iconic representation. Visual images and material artifacts can facilitate *moralization* (legitimation through references to specific value systems) by subtly evoking broadly shared and established norms, values, and belief systems (see above). They perform *mythopoiesis* (legitimation through narratives) through visual storytelling, the proliferation of visual stereotypes (e.g., Hardy & Phillips, 1999), and providing visual ‘evidence’ for the truth of such narratives. Similarly, visuals subtly and powerfully link complex phenomena to established cultural myths (e.g., Zilber, 2006), by ‘fitting’ them into established cultural formats featuring heroes, villains and victims, and framing them as heroic quests, stories of survival, or tragic narratives of downfall. Finally, by virtue of their inherent truth claims, visual images display normality and established imagery, thereby supporting legitimation strategies building on *normalization*. Further, complex and globally distributed phenomena (like the Global Financial Crisis; see Höllerer, Jancsary, & Grafström, 2014) are cognitively normalized by combining sophisticated verbal text with established imagery in order to encapsulate them in a comprehensible idea. While verbal rhetoric is widely studied, how legitimation is accomplished by other semiotic modes has rarely been tackled. The specific features and affordances of the visual mode – especially its ability to allude without providing grounds or logical conjunctions, the immediacy of its impact, and the tendency towards polysemy – provide visual legitimation strategies with room to manoeuvre that deserve much more scholarly attention.

INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS, VOCABULARIES AND INSTITUTIONAL PLURALITY

Institutional logics are composed of cognitive schema, normative expectations and material practices; they are socially shared, deeply held assumptions and values that form a framework for reasoning, provide criteria for legitimacy, and help organize time and space (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012). In short, institutional logics are cultural rules that provide practical guides for action (Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2003; Dunn & Jones, 2010). Scholars conceptualize logics as originating within societal sectors – such as professions, corporations, community, the market, the state, the family and religions (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012) – because in modern, differentiated societies, knowledge is distributed, and social reality is segmented into distinct ‘provinces’ of meaning (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1967) or ‘value spheres’ (Weber, 1978 [1922]). However, these logics do not exist in isolation from each other, but may interpenetrate, and societies are characterized by specific constellations of institutional logics (e.g., Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Jones & Livne-Tarandach, 2008) that become institutionally complex when contradictions between them arise (e.g., Besharov & Smith, 2014; Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011; Raynard, 2016).

Although scholars of institutional logics emphasize both the ideational (e.g., language, cognitive frames and symbols) and material dimension (e.g., structures and practices) (e.g., Thornton et al., 2012), research tends to privilege the ideational, especially in terms of language and cognition as demonstrated by Jones, Boxenbaum and Anthony’s (2013) analysis of the most influential institutional logics articles. Scholars emphasize empirical analysis of logics through written language (e.g., Jones & Livne-Tarandach, 2008; McPherson & Sauder, 2013; Meyer & Höllerer, 2010; Mohr & Duquenne, 1997; Nigam & Ocasio, 2010; Ruef, 1999). As Friedland (2013: 26) notes, institutional logics are ‘tied to vocabularies of both motive and belief’; vocabulary structure is language centric, involving the frequency of key words, their relationship to one another and their relationship to exemplars that render vocabularies concrete

and understandable (Loewenstein, Ocasio, & Jones, 2012). We argue here that institutional logics are symbolically represented also by material and visual vocabularies (e.g., Höllerer et al. 2013; Jones, Maoret, Massa, & Svejnova, 2012; Jones, Boxenbaum, & Anthony, 2013). However, the role material and visual resources play and whether they engender distinct mechanisms has received only scarce attention.

Materiality

Institutional logics scholars rarely theorize the role that objects play in institutions and institutional processes. In examining vocabularies of seminal institutional logics articles, Jones, Boxenbaum and Anthony (2013) found a rate of only 0.003% where material and practice co-occurred; thus, ‘the materials that underpin, or concretely convey, certain structures and practices, seem either implicit or peripheral in many studies of institutional logics’ (p. 54). Empirical studies of institutional logics hint at materiality, but focus on governance (e.g., Reay & Hinings, 2009; Scott, Martin, Mendel, & Caronna, 2000; Thornton, 2002), contested practices in professions (Dunn & Jones, 2010; Lounsbury, 2007; Smets, Morris, & Greenwood, 2012; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) and classification of actors and practices (Mohr & Duquenne, 1997; Ruef, 1999). It is unclear whether any material objects were mobilized or changed by shifts in organizational structure or contested practices. How material objects change is central to understanding human history: we create, what MacGregor (2010) calls a ‘biography of things’ that reveals institutional transformations and material transformations, thus enabling us to revise history by how we interrogate material objects. For example, the development of X-rays for medicine were used on Egyptian mummies, revealing the specific talisman Egyptian pharaohs took into the afterlife and the trade routes associated with a jade (MacGregor, 2010). Friedland (2013: 37) advocates that ‘[u]nobservable substances must be transmuted into observable objects – nested and interlocked – which are the means by which

practices are anchored, affected and oriented'. Thus, material artifacts reflect tensions, settlements and transformations of institutional order (Roger Friedland, 2016 personal communication). Scholars should 'examine how material objects and their physical properties anchor and carry logics' (Jones, Boxenbaum, & Anthony, 2013: 64).

To reveal how materiality anchors logics that enable them to endure or change over time and transfer across contexts, scholars use a relational approach to examine the patterns of co-occurrences within material elements as well as with language and actors (Mohr & White, 2008). For example, using French restaurants as a case study, Rao et al. (2003) analyzed the ingredients of dishes and key roles (e.g., waiter and chef) to illuminate the shift in logics from classical to nouvelle cuisine. Jones et al. (2012) demonstrated that modern functional architects, who catered to business clients, use a linguistic vocabulary of technical, efficiency and industry coupled with a restricted set of materials: concrete, steel, and glass. In contrast, modern organic architects, who served a wider mix of clients, deployed a linguistic vocabulary of organic, nature and technical coupled with a variety of materials: wood, brick, concrete, steel and glass. These stable relations of linguistic vocabularies, construction materials and clients revealed two logics of modern architecture that were fought over and finally reconciled later by architects who integrated functional and organic modernism. Thus, semiotic codes and material bases are key dimensions of logics that offer an insight into institutional change and stability (Jones, Anthony, & Boxenbaum, 2013; Jones, Lorenzen, & Sapsed, 2015). Relationships among material objects or aspects thereof reveal a material vocabulary similar to the vocabulary structure described by Loewenstein et al. (2012). The relationality of material objects form a language. Architectural and religious books explain how to decode and read the material form of churches (e.g., spatial plan and layout, arches, windows etc.) (Kieckhefer, 2004). Thus, material forms, like written text, need to be read and require a different form of literacy (Woolgar & Cooper, 1999).

Material objects are a particularly important means for the translation, diffusion and institutionalization of logics over time (Jones, Boxenbaum, & Anthony, 2013). For example, Jones and Massa (2013) show how Unity Temple became a boundary object that framed novel practices for Unitarians (e.g., a building that expresses their unique beliefs and practices) in a way quite distinct from how it was framed for modern architects (e.g., how to reconceptualize space, form a new material of concrete by using site pouring, rather than blocks that imitate stone) even though it was the same building. Ocasio, Mauskapf, and Steele (2016) propose that logics are constituted through collective memory, which is stored in material artifacts. Latour (1986) asserts that materials support the durability of social arrangements. Similarly, Pinch (2008) stresses the importance of materiality in producing and reproducing institutions. As such, material objects can be important carriers of and facilitate mechanisms by which logics are sustained and transformed over time. Material artifacts as boundary objects enable and reflect pluralism within the institutional environment. For example, Stave churches in Norway capture the transition from paganism to Christianity (Christie, 2016). They were ‘patterned on a foreign Romanesque style’, housed ‘a new religion conceived in distant Mediterranean lands ... [and] were adorned with dragons and heroes from Norse myth and legend’ (Byock, 1990). Jones and Massa (2013) demonstrate that variations in Christian church architecture mirror variations in beliefs (ideas), people and practices. These beliefs are encoded in material form such as spires and church layout that stabilize beliefs (God as outside of, or immersed in, human lives) and reproduce practices (priest as intermediary between faithful and God). Drawing on Norberg-Schulz’s (1986) framework, Jones and Vaara (2014) start to sketch out the grammar of a material vocabulary – topology (place and spatial arrangement), morphology (formal structure) and typology (figural quality) – that illuminates institutional logics, as well as their stability and change.

Visuality

Building on Mills' (1940) understanding that typical vocabularies are woven into the institutionalized fabrics of specific institutional orders and their logics, Meyer et al. (2013) argue that visual signification is a central resource for the constitution, encoding and instantiation of macro-level meaning structures. Visual signs are more immediately perceived, less socially controlled and are able to evoke implicit parts of social knowledge. They are able to 'recall complex systems of knowledge through a minimal sign' (Meyer et al., 2013: 508; see also Quattrone, 2009), and are more quickly and easily processed (e.g., Edell & Staelin, 1983; Mitchell & Olson, 1981). In an analogy to 'vocabularies-of-practice' (Loewenstein et al., 2012, building on Mills, 1940), Höllerer et al. (2013) introduce the concept of 'imageries-of-organizing'. Similar to work that has underlined the substantial role vocabulary structure plays in the maintenance and change of institutional logics (e.g. Ocasio, Loewenstein & Nigam, 2015), they show—based on their in-depth analysis of images in corporations' CSR reports – that such shared imageries-of-organizing at least match the written word in their ability to materialize the unobservable, unknowable substances of institutional logics (Friedland, 2009; Friedland, Mohr, Roose, & Gardinali, 2014) and, in the literal sense of the word, make the invisible visible. Höllerer et al. (2013) find typical imageries that represent different structural semiotic opposites (e.g. Greimas, 1983) and organize the visual CSR discourse in distinct field-level logics. Akin to studies on occurrences and co-occurrences of verbal semantic cues, visual typology mostly focuses on the content of the images. In order to fully grasp the visual potential, future research needs to address how different institutional or field-level logics are encoded and evoked through variations in style, perspective, color, or, more general, through different aesthetic codes.

According to Höllerer et al. (2013), perhaps the greatest unexplored potential of a visual perspective lies in the ability of visual images and artifacts to act as a 'bridging device'. In their

study, visuals align globally theorized ideas with local examples and symbols, allow for the simultaneous communication of potentially irreconcilable ideas and ideational systems, and bridge the past, present and future. These findings complement and extend earlier research in science and technology studies on visual images as ‘boundary objects’ (e.g., Henderson, 1995) that connect different realms of meaning, epistemic communities and activities (e.g., Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007; 2009; Justesen & Mouritsen, 2009). This makes visuals highly useful for research on institutional pluralism and complexity (e.g., Greenwood et al., 2011; Kraatz & Block, Chapter 20 this volume). Höllerer et al. (2013) show how visuals, due to their substantial polysemy, holistic impression and lower level of social scrutiny, ‘resolve, bridge and/or conceal existing inconsistencies between different institutional spheres and their underlying logics’ (p. 140). In a similar vein, this capacity of visual images and artifacts to reduce perceived incommensurability and facilitate the maneuvering of overlaps and ruptures may play a considerable role in creating and sustaining hybrid organizations (e.g., Battilana & Dorado, 2010), or for the reconfiguration and transposition activities of amphibious entrepreneurs or organizations (Powell & Sandholtz, 2012; Korff, Oberg, & Powell, 2015). It requires ‘visual literacy’ to decode such meaning, but also to unveil manipulation and power that, given our lack of knowledge about its working, often ‘fly under the radar’ with visual signification.

THEORIZING, TRANSLATING AND FRAMING PROCESSES

A core focus within institutional theory is how ideas and practices are theorized, diffused, adopted and adapted (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Theorizing is a ‘strategy for making sense of the world’ and most effective when promulgated by legitimated theorists (e.g., scientists, professionals) (Strang & Meyer, 1993: 493, 487-496). For example, the Canadian accounting profession instigated change through theorization: they began by identifying problems,

specifically organizational failings, and providing possible solutions, and subsequently justified these new solutions by ‘invoking’ professional values (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002). Theorization provides ready-made, abstracted, and simplified accounts that explain and justify the ‘who’, ‘what’ and ‘why’ and are thought to be more persuasive because ‘actual practices are interpreted as partial, flawed, or corrupt implementation of theorized ones’ (Strang & Meyer, 1993: 499).

Research on translation reveals that as ideas and practices and their theorizations travel, they are edited (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996) and adapted to local needs and situations (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Wedlin & Sahlin, Chapter 4 this volume). Translation is a linguistic analogy first proposed by Latour (1992) to map the dynamics of artifacts (e.g., AND statements reveal complimentary elements whereas OR statements identify substitutions and translations). Although it is acknowledged that ideas are often materialized, the focus is mostly on ‘linguistic artifacts’ whose ‘repetitive use in unchanged form ... [such as] labels, metaphors, platitudes objectifies them’ (Czarniawska & Sévon, 1996: 33).

Following Goffman (1986), frames are socially constructed guides to interpretation, and framing means the ‘socially situated process of meaning construction’ (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014: 183). Framing defines a situation (Goffman, 1986) and scholars who study frames emphasize either the strategies for, or content of, frames (Benford & Snow, 2000). Institutional scholars explore frames, for instance, in relation to identity constructions (Creed, Scully, & Austin, 2002; Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012), architects’ rhetorical strategies (Jones & Livne-Tarandach, 2008) or the interpretation of globally diffusing concepts (Fiss & Zajac, 2006; Meyer & Höllerer, 2010) to reveal how meaning varies within and across different contexts.

Studies on theorizing, translating and framing within institutional theory are primarily, if not exclusively, language-centric and espouse the goal of moving beyond ‘the brute material

facts' (Cornelissen, Durand, Fiss, Lammers & Vaara, 2015: 10). Thus, they tend to edit out the material world and its visual representations. Institutional scholars view language as performative – that is, producing and reproducing institutions. What institutional theory still lacks is how material artifacts and visual representations influence processes of theorizing, translating and framing to shape meaning construction and transmission that are at the center of institutional theory.

Materiality

Material objects play a central role in theorization through symbols and narratives. The cross in Christianity theorizes the spiritual journey (enlightenment), where the vertical represents God to earth and the horizontal human crossing the divine to the other side (Roberts, 2011). Gospel stories in stained glass are material objects that provide visual narratives that act as readymade accounts of religious values and beliefs. A building may theorize and make tangible a different kind of relationship with, and experience of, God. Jones and Massa (2013: 1117) in their study of Unity Temple showed how Revered Johonnot and architect Frank Lloyd Wright theorized 'a new ecclesiastical aesthetic by marrying Unitarian and modern rational, scientific ideas into symbolic and material form' and by translating the four key ideas of the Unitarian faith – love, reason, community, and free expression – into the material. Although translation was originally a linguistic analogy for Latour, he emphasized its material base: to translate '[y]ou have to go and come back *with* the "things" if your moves are not to be wasted. But the "things" have to be able to withstand the return trip without withering away' (Latour, 1986: 7). Thus, material objects, which may or may not include visual representations, are at the heart of theorization, translation and framing, but relatively invisible within institutional theory.

Translation enables ideas and practices to move and demands material objects that are immutable mobiles such as books, maps and graphs (Latour, 1986). Immutability means that

the material object is durable: it withstands travel, enhances storage and reduces corruption through error. Mobility means that the material object is portable so that it can travel, enabling transfer, comparison, translation and innovation of ideas. Translation processes of material artifacts also reshape work practices, such as Frank Gehry adapting airplane design software to the design of buildings, which, as it rippled through interdependent suppliers, sparked ‘wakes of innovation’ when organizations revised their work practices to adapt to the technology (Boland, Lyytinen, & Yoo, 2007). Within institutional theory, few scholars examine how the immutability and mobility of material artifacts influences institutions and institutional processes.

Framing processes also involve material objects, which act as boundary objects, such as museum artifacts, prototypes or blueprints. Boundary objects ‘are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites’ (Star & Griesemer, 1989: 393). For example, engineers, technicians and assemblers created shared meaning by the using prototypes that enabled them to move beyond the knowledge of their discrete occupational communities and coordinate action (Bechky, 2003). Frames tap into existing social categories and institutions to capture ‘the social underpinnings of society’ (Goffman, 1986) and linking organizational actors to their social context (Bielby & Bielby, 1994; MacLean, 1998). For example, blueprints coordinate actions among architects, engineers and contractors, but are also flexible enough to facilitate distinct frames: the architect spatial relations, the engineer load bearing and mechanical conduits, the contractor material needs and subcontractor specialties. Material artifacts may trigger institutional change when they become exemplars that reframe action and possibilities. For example, Unity Temple as a material exemplar was worthy of emulation, which not only enhanced stable interpretations among social actors, but also diffused ideas and practices (Jones & Massa, 2013). The church is not an immutable mobile, but its material and

visual representations in the form of sketches, photos, plans and books of the church are immutable mobiles. The combination, the immutable immobile church and the immutable mobiles of the church, can diffuse new beliefs, practices and understandings that transform the institution of church architecture. When material artifacts do not survive in physical form or visual representation, they are hard pressed to survive in collective memory (Jones, 2010; Jones & Massa, 2013) and thus cannot act as a means to reframe beliefs, practices or symbolic systems that may guide future action.

Visuality

Despite the emphasis in institutional theory that it is not practices that travel, but rather theorized models and their framings (e.g., Strang & Meyer, 1993; Strang & Soule, 1998), the potential of visual images and artifacts has to date not been systematically explored. Theorization involves defining a ‘problem’ and a ‘solution’ including practices, role identities for a particular cast of actors and clarifications of causal relationships between categories (Greenwood et al., 2002). Due to its immediacy of perception, facticity and emotional impact, visuals are able to powerfully communicate problems and failings cognitively and affectively. NGOs and activist groups rely strongly on shocking imagery in order to point at societal and environmental problems, such as human rights violations, animal suffering or environmental disasters. Similarly, the media employ imagery in order to make problems concrete and tangible, and endow them with facticity (e.g., Höllerer et al., 2014). With regard to explaining the benefits of the proposed solution, visual representations suggest relationships through spatial juxtaposition of means and ends (e.g., showing a modern factory as integrated in unspoiled nature; Höllerer et al., 2013), abstract ways of establishing causal chains (e.g., in flow-charts, figures, blueprints, or sketches of prototypes), or by providing visual ‘evidence’ of effectiveness (e.g., various forms of charts or infographics).

Meyer, Jancsary, Höllerer and Boxenbaum (2016) elaborate how visual text enables initial framing, theorization, and sedimentation, and thereby supports the institutionalization of shared ideas, values and beliefs.

Similarly, framing cues (Goffman, 1986) or contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982) clearly have substantial material and visual components that deserve much more attention in our theory development. In real life contexts, situated interpretations of meaning are hardly effected on the basis of verbal signs only, but integrate multimodal signs, i.e., visual, verbal and material components. More systematically extending framing theory by integrating visuality might, for instance, build on Snow and Benford's (1988) 'core framing tasks' of diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing. *Prognostic* framing could be expected to build more on neutral and technical visual artifacts, such as flow-charts and causal models, while *motivational* framing (and, to a lesser degree, *diagnostic* framing) might rely more on highly symbolic and emotional visual artifacts in order to put 'fire in the belly and iron in the soul' (Gamson, 1992: 32).

The potential of visual representations to act as 'bridging devices' (Höllerer et al., 2013) is equally relevant for framing and translation processes. In their study on the visual translation of CSR, visuals align globally theorized ideas with local examples and symbols, allow for the simultaneous communication of potentially irreconcilable ideas and ideational systems, and bridge the past, present and future. This bridging capacity is related to particular visual affordances. First, due to their iconicity, their content is more broadly understood, increasingly constituting a kind of global visual language (Machin, 2004). Second, visuals are able to transport complex meaning in a restricted space, enabling them to travel far without requiring intense engagement and adaptation. Third, their persuasive appeal is more subtle, allowing for more implicitness and ambiguity (e.g., McQuarrie & Phillips, 2005; Phillips, 2000). Visuals facilitate translation not only vertically (global/local), but also horizontally (e.g., between fields

or logics). Justesen and Mouritsen (2009), for example, show how different types of visual artifacts invoke different conceptions of time and are able to connect epistemic communities within and across organizations and professions. Finally, translation – similar to legitimacy – may also have an *affective* and/or *aesthetic* dimension: Local audiences not only understand the novel concepts cognitively, but also develop emotional attitudes towards them and evaluate their desirability on the basis of their own aesthetic codes.

IDENTITY AND IDENTIFICATION

Identities answer the questions ‘who are we’ or ‘who am I’ through the lens of social categories and social comparison (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Cerulo, 1995; Brickson, 2005) and have long been a central topic in organizational institutionalism (e.g., Glynn, 2000; Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014). Research has studied social identities (e.g., Creed & Scully, 2000), role identities (e.g., Chreim, Williams, & Hinings, 2007; Goodrick & Reay, 2010), and collective identities (e.g., Wry, Lounsbury, & Glynn, 2011) on the individual, organization and field levels. More recent debates have been devoted to the relationship between identities and the larger (pluralistic) institutional environments in which they are embedded (e.g., Rao et al. 2003; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006) or to ‘identity work’ (e.g., Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010) that denotes the active engagement of actors in constructing a favorable, legitimate, and coherent self-identity. Issues of identity and identification are strongly related to feelings and emotions (e.g., Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000). However, the role of emotion for institutional topics is, as yet, rather undertheorized, and a related body of literature is only just emerging (e.g., Creed, Hudson, Okhuysen, & Smith Crowe, 2014; Haack et al., 2014; Voronov & Vince, 2012). Material artifacts and visual representations signify identities in manifold ways: They mediate between the individual and his or her identities, materialize/manifest role identities (e.g., stethoscope and white coat signify medical

doctors) and enhance their cultural ‘fit’, cue social identities and establish criteria for membership, symbolize adherence to broader social categories and, at the same time, allow for differentiation and individualization. Material and visual artifacts facilitate ‘doing’ identities and elicit identification through an emotional connection to objects (Höllerer et al. 2013; Jones & Massa, 2013; Rafaeli & Pratt, 2006).

Materiality

When studying identity, scholars tend to highlight their ideational or symbolic elements that provide cultural resources for identity claims (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Rao et al., 2003). For example, gay and lesbian ministers use cultural resources to manage contradictions between professional roles and marginalized social identities (Creed et al., 2010). This raises the fundamental question of how identity claims based on cultural or symbolic resources can be ‘self-replicated and persist beyond the lifetime of creators’ (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006: 234). The materialization of identities – whether individual (e.g., Picasso’s paintings), organizational (e.g., Sidmore, Owings and Merrill’s buildings), or collective (the city of Boston or Barcelona’s unique architecture and parks) – enable identities to endure over time and transfer across space. For example, the Eiffel Tower is a material symbol of Parisian identity that is widely recognized beyond Paris or France. Although institutional scholars recognize material artifacts as carriers of institutions (Scott, 2008), research has not explored what key dimensions and scope conditions of material artifacts influence institutions and institutional processes.

Identity scholars have highlighted the central role of artifacts in expressing identity and engendering identification (as well as dis-identification) for individuals, organizational members and collectives such as logos (Baruch, 2006), built spaces (Berg & Kreiner, 1992; Wassermann & Frenkel, 2010; Jones & Massa, 2013; Yanow, 2006), dress (Elsbach & Pratt,

2007; Miller, 2009; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993) and office décor (Elsbach, 2004) to express 'collective values, beliefs and feelings' (Yanow 2006: 42). Material artifacts express values and beliefs, enabling 'people [to] understand themselves, their organizations and their institutions' (Rafaeli & Pratt, 2006: 279).

The few studies that reveal institutional processes of materiality in identity expression, and identification processes, show that when individuals are allowed to personalize their office through décor such as photos and memorabilia, they identify more with the organization (Elsbach, 2004). When designers develop a recognizable, though unsigned, signature style, even in a commoditized product such as toy cars, it enables the organization to create desirable products for the market, while affirming the individual's self-concept (Elsbach, 2009). These self-concepts of designers varied in their desire for idealism and control over the design; strong idealism and control enacted an individual identity whereas receiving and building on others' ideas expressed a more collective or collaborative identity (Elsbach & Flynn, 2013). When a collective's distinctive history is encoded into a material artifact, such as a church building, it becomes a collective identity marker. For example, Frank Lloyd Wright customized Unity Temple by marrying Unitarian ideas with novel materials to express a coherent identity of a progressive Unitarian church, triggering the identification of Unitarians with the church building and enabling the church to be supported by the congregation for over 100 years (Jones & Massa, 2013). The key insight is that, in order to signify identity and engender identification, collective material artifacts, similar to personal identity markers (Elsbach, 2004), depend on customizing and embedding what is distinctive about an individual's, organization's or collective's history into the material artifact.

When buildings, whether church or commercial, do not engender identification by its organizational members, the building is destroyed along with its organizational community. In this way the material artifact enables the institution to persist over time. Just as importantly, a

material artifact does not automatically engender identification. As Wasserman and Frenkel (2010) show, a building can spawn acts of resistance when it is seen to be encoding beliefs, symbols and activities that contradict or offend its occupants.

Future research can explore whose identity is materialized (or omitted through not being materialized) when there are multiple identities within an organization or collective. Do various identities hive off into distinct material artifacts and does this lead to identity conflict, expansion or organizational fragmentation and demise? The role of durability and its influence on identity markers is equally important. How does the decay rate and variance in materiality influence whose identity persists or is forgotten? Can material artifacts help transfer identities across time and space as presumed by most global enterprises in terms of their branding and advertising?

Visuality

Visual communication plays a substantial role in creating and performing identities due to their potential to express adherence and deviance simultaneously, through aspects such as color, perspective, or subtle reference to shared symbols. Such effect is often more latent and not consciously noticed (e.g., McQuarrie & Phillips, 2005), meaning that visuals, if designed carefully, may reproduce identities, or deviate from them with a substantially lower risk of triggering legitimacy discounts. Visual images and artifacts evoke stereotypes, but also facilitate subtle variation due to the fact that they always need to exemplify social categories. For instance, a photograph can never visualize ‘an academic’ in a purely abstract way, so any depiction necessarily displays other categories (e.g., gender, race, age, or dress). Outside institutional theory, this has been acknowledged in research on image, reputation, and branding (e.g., Schroeder, 2012). Schill (2012) argues that visual images are particularly useful for differentiating actors immediately from each other and providing heuristics about background,

personality, and demeanor in very short spaces of time. Such affordance is useful for reinforcing collective identities on the field level, but also for stressing the idiosyncratic nature of the identity on the organizational or individual level which is, as Navis and Glynn (2010) have shown, particularly important once a new category has achieved broad legitimacy. One strand of literature has focused on the construction of corporate identity through CEO portraiture and has claimed, for instance, that visualization may communicate intangible aspects of identity, such as intellectual and social capital (e.g., Davison, 2010), create or reinforce brands through narrativization (e.g., Boje & Smith, 2010), and help to maneuver the tricky waters of authenticity (e.g., Guthey & Jackson, 2005). Going beyond portraiture, Pratt and Rafaeli (1997) have also shown how social identities are related to corporate dress codes. This ability of visuals to communicate conformity, as well as uniqueness, can also be observed in the construction of organizational logos (Drori, Delmestri, & Oberg, 2015). Similarly, Vaara, Tienari, and Irrmann (2007) investigate how organizations employ visuals, among other resources, to resolve identity tensions during mergers and acquisitions. Due to their bridging potential and ability to encode messages inconspicuously, visuals may also facilitate role integration (e.g., Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). Role integration implies porous boundaries between multiple role identities, meaning that roles are either permeable (i.e., an actor can perform one role identity while currently invested in another), or role referencing is common (i.e., an actor can reference one role identity while in the domain of another). Visuals may increase both role permeability (e.g., by visually naturalizing the ‘home-office’) and role referencing (e.g., a manager displaying family photographs on her desk).

Besides issues of conformity and differentiation, existing research has pointed to the fact that identities may encompass elements that are either distinctly non-discursive or, at the very least, difficult to verbalize (Giddens, 1984). Researchers utilize what Meyer et al. (2013) have labelled ‘dialogical approaches’ to capture such identity work. For instance, Slutskaya,

Simpson, and Hughes (2012) use photoelicitation techniques to materialize the more physical elements of butchers' identities. As visuals, due to their spatial ordering, are able to create particular positions for themselves in distinct environments, Shortt and Warren (2012) use participant-taken photographs to reconstruct elements of hairdresser's identities. Such pioneering research shows that neglecting the visual, material, and aesthetic aspects of identity work cannot holistically capture the lived experience of actors in the field.

We further suggest that research on the emotional aspects of identification needs to incorporate the affective qualities of visuals. Visuals trigger (dis-)identification with organizations, social roles, and particular values by suggesting distinct attitudes towards objects and issues much more easily, directly, and subtly than verbal text. Photographs, in particular, impose particular perspectives and social distance (e.g., Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), thereby creating either engagement or dis-engagement between the viewer and the viewed, as well as constituting power relations. Additionally, the visual depiction of roles and types allows for direct interactions between audiences and depicted people (e.g., through eye contact) and may adjust both similarity and difference between the ideal type and the assumed audience, thereby increasing the potential for identification. Schill (2012), for instance, argues that visual depictions of politicians aim at creating similarity to their audiences, and thereby increase identification. Such identification is facilitated by strongly emotional symbolism.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we started from the observation that scholars in institutional theory have been remiss in addressing material and visual aspects of institutions and institutional processes. Whereas most institutional inquiry still focuses on verbal language, we have argued that materiality and visuality are at least equally relevant and have therefore discussed the value of such 'multimodality' (Jancsary, Höllerer, & Meyer, 2016; Kress, 2010) in central topics of

institutional theory: legitimacy and legitimation, institutional logics, vocabularies and pluralism, theorization, translation and framing, and identity and identification. In this final section, we will summarize the main learnings from our engagement with the material and visual.

First, we suggest that institutions are multimodal achievements. The meanings we encounter in our daily organizational lives are created, manifested, shared, stored and transmitted in a variety of forms that clearly transcend the spoken or written word. Materiality shapes the very way we encounter institutions – through our bodies and senses – and through material objects in our physical environment. Visual images are almost ‘omnipresent’ in our daily (private as well as professional) lives. It is therefore negligent to assume that institutional theory can or should be a theory of spoken and written language only. Materiality reshapes our institutional world by altering the durability and transferability by which meanings and practices are experienced and shared across time and space. For example, materials have always mediated our communication, but changes in materiality, such as new technologies have transformed when, where and how we communicate such as speeding it up and creating virtual interactions via email, Skype, Google hangouts, Facebook, tweets, texting and IM chats. We have greater transferability by communicating and sharing understandings with more people more quickly and across more time zones, but may increasingly have less durability in those understandings and meanings, as we communicate in shorter and more limited ways (e.g., thousands of 140-character tweets daily). The ease with which visuality in the digital age is available and malleable for almost everybody (e.g., Kress, 2010) makes it an increasingly dominant resource for meaning-making. In fact, with the rise of technologies like the ‘emoji’ (i.e., ideograms and/or smileys used primarily in electronic communication) or ‘snapchat’ (i.e., electronic communication through temporary photography) which replace large amounts of verbal information with immediate visual cues, an increasing relevance of visual images and

artifacts is to be expected. Consequently, materiality and visuality need to be integrated much more systematically and thoroughly in institutional thinking.

Second, we have shown that – although the material and the visual (and the verbal) are usually strongly intertwined in the creation, dissemination and perception of images and artifacts – the modes can, and should, be distinguished by their specific characteristics and workings. Materiality expresses itself through the properties such as durability and transferability of objects and artifacts. Visuality is constituted through spatial ordering and composition, holistic presentation, immediacy of perception and substantial polysemy. Such a perspective stresses that the visual and the material have distinct potentials for meaning-making that are different to those of the verbal. Such difference needs to be accounted for in our theories if we are to understand the ‘multimodal construction of reality’ and its implications for organizational institutionalism.

Third, while we see that both materiality and visuality provide novel insights into a large number of institutional constructs and processes, they do so in different ways. Materiality influences institutional constructs and processes by the way in which it shapes the durability and transferability of ideas, practices and embedded meanings such that they can exist beyond an individual, specific time or place, and by how materials are relationally embedded with one another and with ideas, thereby providing not only (in)coherence but also (in)stability in meaning systems. Visual images provide higher credibility in our Western culture, are more evocative of emotion, and more broadly comprehensible across cultural and linguistic boundaries than verbal text. Combined with a high potential for polysemy, fast cognitive processing, and spatial construction of relations, they are a crucial means of meaning construction and rhetoric. We have outlined the particular workings of both materiality and visuality for core institutional processes and have highlighted the need for future research in these areas. A full understanding of institutional processes, consequently, does not only need

to take multiple sign systems and their specific modes into account, but also their interaction and the particular ‘division of labor’ between them.

Fourth, and finally, we must be aware that despite their performative role in the creation, sustenance and challenge of institutions, material and visual artifacts are not ‘simple tools’ that can be applied strategically for institutional purposes. On the one hand, they are historically and culturally bounded, which implies that their role and workings are also institutionally enabled and restricted. On the other hand, as are all sign systems, materiality and visibility are subject to power and interest. What is needed, therefore, is an increased material and visual literacy of not only practitioners, but especially of researchers. This requires adequate sets of analytical knowledge and methodological tools that are conducive to capturing the particularities of materiality and visibility (e.g., Carlile et al., 2013; Jancsary et al., 2016; McDonnell, 2010).

Summing up, since institutions have relative permanence of a distinctly social sort, institutional research will benefit from further elaboration on how materiality and visibility shape this relative permanence and enable (or disable) the meaning making that underpins and colors institutions.

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