



Review

The role of temporality in institutional stabilization: A process view

Journal:	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>
Manuscript ID	AMR-2019-0486-Original.R4
Manuscript Type:	Original Manuscript
Theoretical Perspectives:	Institutional theory, Philosophy of science and/or sociology of knowledge, Microfoundations of strategy
Other Theoretical Perspectives:	
Topic Areas:	Social Construction < Organization and Management theory, Institutional Logics < Organization and Management theory, Impact on Society < Organization and Management theory
Other Topic Areas:	
Abstract:	<p>The emerging processual view of institutions has eroded the assumption of institutional stability in favor of a more dynamic view of institutions as ongoing processes, thereby foregrounding the question of institutional stabilization. Grounded in a process ontology, we conceptualize institutions as ever-becoming yet enduring social processes that are meaningful and carry prescriptions for actors' legitimate participation. Building on this conceptualization, we develop a theoretical model of the role of temporality in institutional stabilization that explores how three dimensions of institutions (meaning, prescriptions, participation) are each stabilized by a facet of temporality (temporal patterns, expectancies, mechanisms), as well as factors affecting each of these links. Our arguments contribute to writing on institutions in relation to temporality, agency and process.</p>

**THE ROLE OF TEMPORALITY IN INSTITUTIONAL STABILIZATION:
A PROCESS VIEW**

ABSTRACT

The emerging processual view of institutions has eroded the assumption of institutional stability in favor of a more dynamic view of institutions as ongoing processes, thereby foregrounding the question of institutional stabilization. Grounded in a process ontology, we conceptualize institutions as ever-becoming yet enduring social processes that are meaningful and carry prescriptions for actors’ legitimate participation. Building on this conceptualization, we develop a theoretical model of the role of temporality in institutional stabilization that explores how three dimensions of institutions (meaning, prescriptions, participation) are each stabilized by a facet of temporality (temporal patterns, expectancies, mechanisms), as well as factors affecting each of these links. Our arguments contribute to writing on institutions in relation to temporality, agency and process.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between institutional change and stability is at the heart of institutional theory but recent institutional scholarship has called into question the underlying dichotomy of change and stability. Following a broader trend in organization studies that challenges the distinction between stability and change (Farjoun, 2010; Schreyögg & Sydow, 2010; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), an understanding of institutions as stable structures has given way to a processual conception of institutions (Meyer, 2019; Reay, Zilber, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2019; Weik, 2019). From this perspective, institutions represent “the unfolding outcome of people’s and collective actors’ continual efforts to maintain, modify, or disturb them” (Reay et al., 2019: 1). This emerging process view of institutions complicates the role of stability as a defining quality of institutions—the “endurance” of institutions as Weik (2019) puts it. From a process perspective, all aspects of social life—including institutions—are continuously in flux (Hernes, 2014; Nayak & Chia, 2011). Thus, a key issue for institutional scholars, and the one that motivates this paper, becomes how institutions can be understood as continuously in flux *and* distinctively stable.

We argue that if we accept both a process view of institutions and the idea that institutions are distinctively enduring phenomena, then our focus shifts from the stability of institutions to their stabilization. Focusing on the stabilization of institutions encourages a conception of institutions as dynamic processes that remain recognizably consistent even while they change in sometimes dramatic ways. Although research on institutional maintenance has emphasized the need for purposeful intervention to keep institutions intact, this research tends to adopt an image of institutions as objects to be maintained, repaired, or saved from gradual decay (Dover & Lawrence, 2010; Trank & Washington, 2009; Wright, Meyer, Reay, & Staggs, 2020). It thus retains a “weak process view” in which “emphasis is placed on the change and development of existing entities” (Reay et al., 2019: 2). In contrast, a strong process view

encourages scholars to “focus more on the processes, to keep in mind the liquidity of institutions” (Meyer, 2019: 40). This shifts our understanding of the world to one “composed of events and experiences, rather than substantial entities” (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013: 5). But while process theory points to stabilization as an important problem to be explained (Chia, 1999; Whitehead, 1985), it does not in itself provide an answer to how this is accomplished. A shift to a process ontology may be generative with respect to theory development (Thompson, 2011)—in our case exploring institutional stabilization—but it still requires the development of substantive arguments to answer theoretical questions.

In this article, we examine one important pathway underpinning the stabilization of institutions as ongoing processes by focusing on the role of temporality. A focus on temporality may seem unexpected since it is typically linked to questions of change and movement rather than stability. But we follow process scholars who argue it is difficult to understand the dynamics of processes “unless we better understand the temporal nature of their making” (Hernes, 2014: 13) in suggesting that temporality also holds the key to understanding their stabilization. Grounded in a strong process view of institutions and the sociology of time, we develop a theoretical model of the role of temporality in institutional stabilization. In brief, we argue that institutional stabilization occurs along three dimensions—institutional meaning, institutional prescriptions, and institutional participation. Each of these dimensions is, we argue, stabilized in part by a distinct facet of temporality – temporal patterns, temporal expectancies, and temporal mechanisms.

Our arguments contribute to writing on institutions in relation to temporality, agency and process. First, our theoretical model repositions temporality, from its traditional position “external” to institutions as either a potential facilitator or a measure of institutional change to

conceptualizing temporality as a “foundational element” of institutions (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016: 1009; Weik, 2019). Second, our model shifts our understanding of the role of agency in stabilizing institutions away from both automatic social controls (Scott, 2013) and the active intervention of hyper-aware, reflexive agents (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Instead, it suggests that institutional stabilization depends on the skilled, legitimate *participation* of institutional actors in the temporal flows of ever-becoming social processes. Institutional work may involve purposeful intervention in the temporal qualities of institutions, but it is less about the reconstruction of structural arrangements than about the continuous, moment-by-moment re-shaping of ongoing processes in flux. Third, we begin to move beyond the “weak-strong” dichotomy in discussions of process studies (Meyer, 2019; Reay et al., 2019; Weik, 2019) by conceiving of institutions not as “fixed” objects but as temporal flows of ongoing processes with evolving and enduring meanings, prescriptions, and forms of participation.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS: A PROCESS VIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL STABILIZATION

Before developing our theoretical model of the role of temporality in institutional stabilization, we first outline some conceptual foundations. We begin by reviewing the problem of institutional stabilization from a process perspective. We then turn to sociological writing on temporality to explore the role of this important but neglected factor in institutional stabilization.

The problem of institutional stabilization

The stabilization of institutions has been most directly addressed by research falling under the umbrella of institutional maintenance (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Micelotta & Washington, 2013; Zilber, 2009). This stream of research has explored ways in which institutions are maintained and reproduced in the face of either direct threat (Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Micelotta & Washington, 2013) or gradual erosion (Dover & Lawrence, 2010; Gill &

Burrow, 2018). Recent research in this tradition has begun to examine the ongoingness of maintenance work (Gill & Burrow, 2018), highlighting the “ever-changing practice performances” needed to restore constant micro break downs (Lok & de Rond, 2013: 185) or addressing ongoing institutional entropy (Dover & Lawrence, 2010). Steele (2021: 344) argues that institutional taken-for-grantedness is a precarious, ongoing accomplishment achieved through “everyday interactional choreography”.

Equating stabilization with “maintenance”, however, reflects an image of institutions as objects to be maintained, repaired, or saved from gradual decay (Gill & Burrow, 2018). This reflects Reay et al.’s (2019: 2) argument that despite moves toward a processual view, institutional research has retained a “weak process view”. Thus, a challenge in examining institutional stabilization from a process perspective is to avoid reifying institutions—“treating them as if they were “things”” (Meyer, 2019: 40)—as doing so obscures the ongoing unfolding of institutions that necessitates stabilization and shapes how it might occur. However, with few exceptions (Meyer, 2019; Reay et al., 2019; Weik, 2019), institutional scholarship has not examined the relationship between institutions and process theory or adopted a strong process view (see Figure 1 for a comparison of weak and strong process views).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Reay et al. (2019: 1) argue that institutions “are all about process, even though this may not always have been evident in some of the institutional theory literature”. In her exploration of institutional endurance, Weik deepens this perspective, arguing that dominant explanations of institutional endurance depend on an understanding of people as cognitively rational, instrumental actors who manufacture and repair institutions; she argues, in contrast, for an understanding of individuals as “speaking, acting, embodied, sensemaking people... [who] co-

constitute institutional processes” (Weik, 2019: 324). Her approach to explaining institutional endurance conceives of institutions as dynamic processes, experienced and understood through their harmonies and rhythms (Weik, 2019). Meyer (2019: 34) contributes to this processual perspective on institutions by returning to institutional theory’s phenomenological roots: drawing on the work of Schutz, Berger, and Luckmann, she argues that “[i]nstitutions and processes are inextricably intertwined phenomena”, such that “the alienation of the two” exists only because of their separate research traditions. Pointedly, she argues that institutions “have no ontological status beyond the activities and processes that enact them either in the social realm or the realm of individuals’ consciousness” (Meyer, 2019: 40).

A process view of institutional stabilization

Despite the emerging interest in a process view of institutions, efforts to articulate the ontology of such a view are only beginning. Thus, we draw on process philosophy to explicate the ontological foundations of a process view of institutional stabilization. A process view of social reality is grounded in the pragmatic and processual philosophies of James (1909), Bergson (1910), Whitehead (1929), and Mead (1964). It is based on a metaphysics of flow and, hence, a distinct ontology of the social world (Thompson, 2011) within which apparently stable entities are understood as temporally unfolding processes (Hernes, 2014; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). The key ontological move in adopting a strong process philosophy is to invert the idea that “things” are ontologically prior to process (which implies that processes describe the transformation of things over time), and instead locate processes as ontologically prior, and hence constitutive of things. It is not that things are not “real”, but rather that they are secondary phenomena – carved out of temporal flows of social life. From this perspective, a concern with stability shifts to an interest in stabilization: how the stabilization of processes and the objects constituted within

1
2
3 them is accomplished and how stabilization is experienced when what underpins it is a
4 continuous temporal flow (Hernes, 2014). Stabilization is never final. There is always the
5 opportunity to recreate the institutional world with each iteration of a social process.
6
7
8
9

10 Applying a process ontology to the study of institutional stabilization suggests a focus on
11 how processes are stabilized. All institutions are ever-becoming social processes – but not that
12 all social processes are institutions. To distinguish institutions from other social processes, we
13 incorporate the idea that institutions are “enduring” features of social life (Hughes, 1936; Scott,
14 2013; Weik, 2019). Thus, from a process view, institutions are ever-becoming social processes
15 distinguished from other social processes by virtue of their relative stability and durability. This
16 does not mean that institutions are static but that they are associated with flows of action that
17 tend to recur in repeated, predictable ways. We thus define institutions as ever-becoming yet
18 enduring social processes that are meaningful and carry prescriptions for actors’ legitimate
19 participation in them.
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32

33 To clarify a process view of institutional stabilization, consider the political institution of
34 federalism defined as a “form of government in which a number of states constitute a political
35 unit while remaining more or less independent with regard to their internal affairs” (OED Online,
36 2021). Donahue and Pollack (2001)’s study of the rhythms of federalism in the United States and
37 the European Union suggests, however, that such a definition overlooks the degree to which
38 federalism is constituted by alternating movements of centralization and decentralization. Its
39 meaning resides significantly in the ongoing “oscillations between the concentration of power in
40 the centre and the reassertion of the individual States in each system” (Donahue & Pollack, 2001:
41 117). The experience of federalism is thus like sitting on a moving swing – the exact point in
42 space at any time is much less meaningful than is its oscillating rhythm. The stability of the
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

swing resides in its motion. Thus, stabilization involves stabilizing—not stopping—the movement of the swing; likewise, the stabilization of institutions as processes is about stabilizing their unfolding movement and trajectory of becoming.

The commitments associated with a process ontology allow us to see and appreciate institutions as ever-becoming processes that powerfully shape social life but require ongoing stabilization. How such stabilization occurs, however, is a question that requires substantive theorizing.

The temporal foundations of institutional stabilization

To examine how institutions are stabilized as ever-becoming social processes, we focus on the role of temporality, which has been highlighted as a distinguishing feature of process thinking (Chia, 2002; Reinecke & Ansari, 2017; Wiebe, 2010). This connection is explicit in Hernes' (2014: 32) discussion of temporality as “active force” that gives life to processes. What we see here, though, is an ontologically distinct conception of temporality. Rather than viewing time as an “objective” index against which processes are measured – the most common conception of time in management research (Kunisch, Bartunek, Mueller, & Huy, 2017) – we take as our starting point a sociological conception of temporality as the “negotiated organizing of time” (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016: 1009; Zerubavel, 1976, 1981). The sociology of time suggests that the temporal structure of our environment is based on conventions and cultural constructions such that time, including clock time, is socially constructed through people's ongoing practices (Adam, 1990; Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). This temporal ordering of activities, events, and experiences creates what Zerubavel (1981) refers to as a socio-temporal order, which guides actors in navigating the social world but it is also subject to people's interventions.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

A key insight from the sociology of time is that temporality is not merely descriptive of social processes but “constitutive” of them (Hernes, 2014; Mead, 1964; Whitehead, 1929). This means that temporalities are internal to social processes, constructing them by helping “structure what is in continuous flow” (Adam, 1990: 18). Temporality shapes the experience of a continuous process by virtue of temporal orientation points and differences that confer meaning to that experience (Elias, 1984). Applying this view of temporality to institutions conceives of institutions not as things that move through time but as processes the temporal qualities of which—their sequences, durations, temporal locations, rhythms, etc.—contribute to their making and meaning. If we consider the institution of the modern university, we see it is constituted in part by a range of temporal regularities. Its temporal patterns revolve around weekly class schedules and extend to tenure clocks and scientific careers, which shape the experience of actors in relationship to it as an institution, though not always in straightforward ways: for faculty members, this might involve the conflicting temporal patterns of research (with its long cycles of intense attention), teaching (with its more immediate, frequent cycles of class time and marking), and administration (with its punctuated rhythms of meetings).

The constitutive role of temporality in relation to institutions suggests that whereas time and temporality have typically been linked to questions of institutional change, temporality may also play a key role in institutional stabilization. Traditional writing on temporality and institutions has focused on time as a measure of change in terms of its pace (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004; Lawrence, Winn, & Jennings, 2001) or as driver of change processes (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016). If we think of temporality as constituting an institution, however, then it is equally tied to the stabilization of that institution. The temporal regularities that help constitute

the modern university, for instance, are essential to its stabilization as an institution: the rhythms of the academic year are central to its ongoing recognizability and reproduction.

In summary, a process ontology provides a generative foundation for conceptualizing institutions as ever-becoming processes that require ongoing stabilization. If temporality plays a constitutive role in social processes, and an important distinction between institutions and other social processes involves their ongoing endurance, then understanding the role of temporality in stabilizing institutions as ever-becoming social processes represents an important question.

A MODEL OF TEMPORALITY IN INSTITUTIONAL STABILIZATION

In this section, we develop a theoretical model of the role of temporality in institutional stabilization. Building on the process ontology we set out above, we argue that temporality plays an important stabilizing role through three linkages that connect specific temporal aspects of institutions (temporal patterns, expectancies, mechanisms) with distinct institutional dimensions (institutional meaning, prescriptions, and participation). We first lay out the core conceptualization of institutional stabilization as an ongoing cycle and then explore each of the model's elements (see Figure 2).

Insert Figure 2 about here

Institutional meaning, prescriptions and participation

A critical issue to establish is what we mean by institutional stabilization from a strong process perspective. Traditional conceptions of institutions define them as “social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience,” that “provide stability and meaning to social life” (Scott, 2013: 56), and that are reproduced through relatively automatic social controls (Jepperson, 1991; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000). A process perspective of institutions moves us away from notions of resilient structures and automatic reproduction; institutions do

not “stay the same” but are continuously becoming—like all social processes. At the same time, the concept of an institution requires a sense of endurance (Weik, 2019). Thus, we need to understand both *what* it is that is stabilized and *how* that is achieved. Before we explore the role of temporality in explaining *how* stabilization is accomplished, we first address the question of *what* is stabilized: drawing on institutional scholarship we suggest that institutional stabilization involves the stabilization of institutional meaning, prescriptions, and participation.

Regardless of the specific focus that scholars adopt in writing about institutions, meaning remains central to the concept of an institution (Höllerer, Daudigeos, & Jancsary, 2017; Leibel, Hallett, & Bechky, 2018; Suddaby, Elsbach, Greenwood, Meyer, & Zilber, 2010). Institutions are laden with meaning both in that they represent a “shared understanding” (Phillips & Malhotra, 2008: 707) and that they are “meaningful” in the sense of being valued: as Selznick (2011: 40) put it, institutions are “infused with value, that is prized not as tools alone but as sources of direct personal gratification and vehicles of group integrity”. The stabilization of institutions thus involves stabilizing the shared understandings in a social system (Lawrence & Phillips, 2019) and their meaningfulness for a community of actors (Kraatz & Flores, 2015; Raffaelli & Glynn, 2015).

Institutions are more than meanings, however; they are also rules for living. Institutions represent shared understandings that “are associated with social controls that ... encourage conformity” (Lawrence & Phillips, 2019: 191). We describe these rules for living as “institutional prescriptions” regarding appropriate behavior and beliefs in specific contexts, deviation from which is associated with social costs in the form of “reduce[d] legitimacy and the access to resources that accompany legitimacy” (Phillips et al., 2000: 28). Institutional prescriptions represent a key feature of institutions (Creed, Hudson, Okhuysen, & Smith-Crowe,

2014; Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011; Jones, 2001) and are central to their stabilization. In a real sense, institutions endure to the degree that they influence behavior and beliefs in a social system: institutions are “vehicles for activity within constraints” (Jepperson, 1991: 146), and so their stabilization necessarily involves the ways in which institutions set those constraints and empower that activity.

Finally, institutional stabilization also depends on the participation of individuals and collective actors in the life of the institution (Creed, Hudson, Okhuysen, & Smith-Crowe, 2020). Participation is what brings institutions to life; it makes meanings meaningful and prescriptions powerful. Our argument builds on phenomenological and inhabited views of institutions that conceive of institutions as constituted by meaningful social interactions (Hallett, 2010; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006; Meyer, 2019), and suggest the need to understand institutional stabilization from the standpoint of participating actors (Creed et al., 2020). As Hallett and Ventresca (2006: 215) argue, “Institutions are not inert containers of meaning; rather they are ‘inhabited’ by people and their doings”. Thus, the stabilization of people’s participation in institutions involves much more than compliance – it includes the myriad individual and collective actions necessary to keep a process on track (Lok & de Rond, 2013). Again, this does not mean simply the repetition of identical forms of participation by identical actors, but rather a recognizable reproduction of participation, even if that involves improvisation and a changing cast of characters (Lok & de Rond, 2013).

In the rest of this section, we propose a model of institutional stabilization (as summarized in Figure 2) underpinned by these three dimensions of institutions—meaning, prescriptions, participation. We argue that institutional stabilization is both an aggregate of the stabilization of each dimension, and a cycle in which the stabilization of one dimension

1
2
3 contributes to the stabilization of another. Thus, stabilizing any of these elements on their own
4
5 does not amount to institutional stabilization but we imagine that the degree of stabilization of
6
7 these elements varies across institutions and over time. Unlike the idea of institutionalization,
8
9 which assumes that process are eventually institutionalized, stabilization is a process of
10
11 continuous emergence in which the institution and all of its dimensions are continuously
12
13 becoming. Focusing on the role of temporality, we examine for each institutional dimension a
14
15 specific facet of temporality that we argue plays a key role in its stabilization, and a set of
16
17 conditions that affect the strength of that relationship.
18
19
20

21
22 **Temporal patterns and the stabilization of institutional meaning**
23

24 Although the model we present is a cycle that could “start” at any point, we begin by
25
26 examining the role of temporality in the stabilization of institutional meaning because of the
27
28 centrality of meaning in institutional scholarship (represented by the left oval in Figure 2). While
29
30 in traditional accounts of institutional theory, “meaning is treated as a relatively stable, external
31
32 cultural structure” (Leibel et al., 2018: 154), conceptualizing institutions as ever-becoming social
33
34 processes leads to a view of meaning with important temporal qualities. The meaning of a
35
36 process can only be grasped through the flow of time, like musical sounds that only become a
37
38 melody when unfolding in temporal succession (Abbott, 2001). Drawing on Schutz, Meyer
39
40 (2019: 34) argues that from a process view of institutions, meaning is “inherently temporal”—
41
42 “accomplished in the present, anticipating future states, and looking back to the past”.
43
44
45
46

47 We argue that institutional meaning arises significantly out of an institution’s “temporal
48
49 patterns”: social conventions regarding the sequence, duration, timing, and rhythm of social
50
51 practices (Zerubavel, 1981). From our perspective, temporality “constitutes a quasi-linguistic
52
53 non-verbal system of signification”, such that temporal patterns act as “signifiers” of meaning
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

(Zerubavel, 1987: 354). A semiotic conception of temporal patterns suggests they act as “texts” – interpretable objects the meaning of which arises out of their location in social systems (c.f., Mohr, 1998). Temporal patterns thus act as a source of meaning because they provide markers of difference within social processes and among them. They introduce “heterogeneity” into what might otherwise be experienced as a continuous, indivisible flow, for instance, how the different days of the week create meaningful distinctions between otherwise equal durations of time (Zerubavel, 1987: 348). Temporal patterns render the flow of institutions interpretable: they create a process geography that allows actors to understand and navigate institutions by virtue of experiences such as transition, iteration, repetition, pausing, acceleration, and deceleration. Temporal patterns thereby act as orienting devices that facilitate comparing, contrasting, and connecting what might otherwise appear disconnected processes (Elias, 1984).

To clarify our understanding of the role of temporal patterns in stabilizing the meaning of institutions, we explore this link in terms of two temporal patterns: rhythm and temporal depth. These patterns align with Hernes’ (2017: 601, 603) definition of process as the “becoming of a trajectory”, which is “a patterning of events that stretches back into time and extends into the future”: rhythms describe the patterning of events; and temporal depth describes the stretching of institutions back in time and extending into the future.

The rhythm of institutions. Rhythm represents a core temporal pattern in social life (Zerubavel, 1981). It is rooted in the temporal regularities experienced by all living organisms, including the daily cycles of activity and rest that reference the rising and setting of the sun (Adam, 1990). Rhythm represents a complex concept that includes the idea of a beat (a pulse, a heartbeat, a sunrise), a tempo (the pace at which the beat repeats), some kind of basic meter (groups of beats), and usually one or more complex temporal regularities above the beat (Berry,

1
2
3 1987). Each aspect can be useful in describing the rhythm of social processes: in evidently
4
5 cyclical processes such as financial reporting, for example, the beat would describe the basic
6
7 temporal unit, perhaps a daily recording of business activity, and would aggregate to longer,
8
9 more complex temporal regularities, such as financial quarters or annual reporting cycles.
10
11

12 The idea of rhythm is central to a process view of institutions (Weik, 2019). Rhythms
13
14 endow institutions with regular, predictable, and forceful temporal patterns. Institutions from this
15
16 perspective are not static structures, but ongoing, evolving processes with distinct, recognizable,
17
18 and impactful rhythms. The significance of rhythm for our argument is its role in establishing
19
20 and stabilizing the meaning of institutions: rhythm allows an otherwise indivisible, continuous
21
22 flow to be made sense of as a meaningful process. Just like sounds cannot become music without
23
24 rhythm, rhythm is central to the meaning of institutions as processes. The meaning of many
25
26 institutions is inherently and obviously established significantly by their rhythms, as in the
27
28 rhythm of election cycles in the institution of political democracy and, more prosaically, the
29
30 rhythm of “quarters” in the institution of basketball.
31
32
33
34

35 The significance of rhythm may only become evident as an institution’s rhythm changes.
36
37 Consider the impact of changing rhythms in the institution of news broadcasting. The advent of a
38
39 24-hour news cycle transformed the meaning of “the news”. Traditionally, “breaking news [was]
40
41 seen as exciting, dramatic, unpredictable and, above all, a marker of news value” (Lewis &
42
43 Cushion, 2009: 316). The nearly continuous updating associated with dedicated news television
44
45 channels and websites transformed the traditional “thirst to be first” such that ““breaking news’
46
47 has quickly gone from being a possibility to a convention” (Lewis & Cushion, 2009: 305).
48
49 Hence, the meaning of the institution of broadcast news has been transformed such that routine
50
51 stories are now reconstructed and delivered as “breaking” news.
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 ***The temporal depth of institutions.*** A second temporal pattern that stabilizes the meaning
4
5 of institutions involves their temporal depth: the “temporal distances into the past and future that
6
7 individuals and collectivities ... consider when contemplating events” (Bluedorn, 2002: 11). The
8
9 relationship between past, present, and future is a fundamental aspect of temporal experience:
10
11 even if the present is “the seat of reality” (Mead, 1964), flows of action are always pitching
12
13 towards a future (anticipating, planning, promising) and informed by the past (habitual practice,
14
15 routines) (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Applying the notion of temporal depth to institutions
16
17 suggests they are not structures located at a “knife-edge” moment in time (Flaherty & Fine,
18
19 2001; Mead, 1932) but rather processes constituted by temporal connections linking the present
20
21 to both the past and an anticipated future. The temporal depth of an institution thus describes the
22
23 degree to which it enrolls the future or the past into the experience of the present.
24
25
26

27
28 As with rhythm, the temporal depth of institutions plays a vital role in shaping their
29
30 meaning. Institutions characterized by an extended temporal depth are those in which the long
31
32 past and/or distant future is explicitly and continuously invoked. Many institutions of capitalism
33
34 are meaningful only in relation to the future: the projective agency of entrepreneurship, the
35
36 future-orientation of investment asset valuation, and the integration of the (imagined) future in
37
38 financial market institutions (Beckert, 2013a). In contrast, the meaning of institutions associated
39
40 with Cambridge and Oxford universities, such as high-table dining (Dacin, Munir, & Tracey,
41
42 2010) and the annual Boat Race (Lok & de Rond, 2013), depend significantly on their
43
44 connections to the centuries over which they have been enacted with relatively little variation.
45
46 The potential impact of shifts in temporal depth on the meaning of institutions is illustrated by
47
48 the “Fridays4Future” school strikes, inspired by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. These
49
50 strikes challenge the links to the future that are central to the institution of education (we educate
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

our children to give them better lives and make a better society) by suggesting that impending climate catastrophe renders those claims moot: education is less meaningful when the children’s future is jeopardized by an impending climate catastrophe.

Moderating factors for temporal patterns. We argue that the degree to which temporal patterns shape institutional meaning depends on the observability of those temporal patterns – the degree that actors can observe and recognize, and thus interpret, those patterns. Observability is not, however, simply a characteristic of the temporal pattern in terms of some objective property but depends on relationships between temporal patterns and observers. We highlight two factors that increase or decrease observability: temporal scale and temporal contrast.

The first factor that affects the observability of a temporal pattern is its temporal scale, which describes the length of time over which there exist “patterned variations in processes” (Bansal, Kim, & Wood, 2018: 223). For an unaided human, temporal patterns that occur on a very small scale, say in the order of nanoseconds, would be unobservable and hence unlikely to shape the meaning of the institution with which they are associated. Similarly, when temporal scales are so long that patterns recur very slowly (e.g., geographical epochs or generational shifts), temporal patterns again become more difficult to observe, fading into a “distant” past or future (Hernes & Schultz, 2020). These limitations may arise because people’s attentional resources are scaled towards specific temporal reference points, or because the attentional structures embedded in organizational routines are scaled toward certain temporal horizons rooted in organizational goals (Bansal et al., 2018). Mismatches can lead to important issues being missed, as observers struggle to interpret the significance of temporal patterns the cycles of which fall below or extend beyond their temporal frame of observation. Corporations, for instance, often direct their attention to 3-5 year strategic planning time horizons and quarterly

1
2
3 financial outcomes, such that planning and reporting routines are ill-equipped to capture longer
4
5 term temporal patterns, such as those associated with climate change (Slawinski & Bansal,
6
7 2012). Thus, we argue that alignment between the temporal scales of temporal patterns and
8
9 actors' temporal frames will increase the degree to which temporal patterns stabilize institutional
10
11 meaning.
12
13

14
15 A second factor that affects the observability of temporal patterns, and thus their link to
16
17 institutional meaning, is the availability and strength of temporal contrasts. Temporal signifiers,
18
19 like all signifiers, work within larger systems of signification. The meaningfulness of temporal
20
21 patterns arises from their relationship to and contrast with other such patterns – the stronger the
22
23 contrast, the more distinctive the temporal pattern becomes and the more significant its ability to
24
25 contribute to the construction of meaning. The contrast between ordinary and sacred days (such
26
27 as the Sabbath) created through periodic alternation in a seven-day weekly cycle, for instance, is
28
29 highly significant for substantiating the meaning of “sacred” (Zerubavel, 1987: 350). Similarly,
30
31 for the speed of a process to be meaningful there needs to be comparable processes with
32
33 contrasting tempos, as illustrated by “fast fashion” or “slow food”. The slow food movement
34
35 promotes an alternative, slower-paced set of food production and consumption, its meaning
36
37 grounded in a temporal contrast to the fast-paced rhythm of industrial processes of fast food (van
38
39 Bommel & Spicer, 2011). Thus, we argue that the availability of temporal contrasts will increase
40
41 the degree to which temporal patterns stabilize institutional meaning.
42
43
44
45
46

47 **Temporal expectancies and the stabilization of institutional prescriptions**

48

49 The second element in our model focuses on the role of “temporal expectancies”—
50
51 expectancies of how long things last, at what intervals they recur, and so on—in stabilizing
52
53 institutional prescriptions. This relationship is, we argue, underpinned by institutional meanings
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

that provide a basis for the formation of expectancies and their translation into prescriptions. Temporal expectancies describe the “highly reliable repertoire of what is expected, likely, or unlikely to take place within certain temporal boundaries” (Zerubavel, 1981: 12). By elaborating the “when”, “how long”, and “how often” of our actions, they render social life orderly and predictable, allowing people to anticipate when events and activities may happen and for how long. Importantly, temporal expectancies are more than anticipated temporal patterns: they represent a “background expectancy” (Garfinkel, 2002) about what we believe is true about the temporal environment and how it ought to remain (Zerubavel, 1976). Like practices (Schatzki, 2001), temporal expectancies are meaningful expectations, the disruption of which renders problematic our sense of normality and background assumptions about a social situation (Garfinkel, 2002). For this reason, temporal expectancies contribute to the taken-for-grantedness of institutions “on the basis of which people get on with their lives” (Steele, 2021: 342).

The core of this element of our model is the link from temporal expectancies to institutional prescriptions: we argue that temporal expectancies ground institutional prescriptions in a temporal landscape that elaborates the demands associated with such prescriptions. Institutional prescriptions not only demand behavior and belief, but often demand it “on time” or “in time” – whether that is on a regular (e.g., daily) basis or a “timely” basis. We again focus on rhythm and temporal depth, now in terms of the temporal expectancies associated with each.

Rhythm expectancies. Rhythm expectancies describe the rhythms that are taken-for-granted or considered legitimate in relation to a specific institution. Rhythm expectancies emerge, we argue, from the meaning of institutions which are shaped by the temporal patterns that actors observe. Returning to the institution of the modern university, temporal patterns with respect to termly or annual rhythms not only shape the meaning of the institution but lead to

temporal expectancies that ground its institutional prescriptions. For students and faculty members, those temporal patterns are translated into expectancies that shape prescribed forms of interaction: recurring events such as termly beginnings and endings not only create a sense of orderliness and predictability to the flow of academic life, but also lead to prescriptions regarding due dates for course registration or end-of-class assignments. Along with these formal prescriptions, there are less formal prescriptions flowing from temporal expectancies: even if not always enforced, notions of being a “good student” are bound up with turning up to a lecture consistently and “on time”.

Temporal depth expectancies. Institutional prescriptions are also grounded in temporal expectancies regarding the temporal depth of institutions, such that the behaviors and beliefs required of actors can include an awareness or integration of the past or future. Financial market institutions, for example, are strongly anchored in expectancies about the future (Beckert, 2013b). Future expectancies are built into calculative devices, financial models, formulas, and negotiations, all of which ground institutional prescriptions that guide the behavior of market participants. Consider the institution of credit as an indispensable element of financial markets and economic growth: credit as an institution demands that creditors “hold the expectation that they will be repaid the loan and the agreed-upon interest at the point in time stipulated in the contract” (Beckert, 2013b: 331). Thus, the institution of credit is built on expectancies regarding its future temporal depth. A change in temporal depth expectancies may have radical consequences for institutional prescriptions. This possibility is illustrated by climate change activism that seeks to strip fossil fuel assets of any future depth expectancy by reclassifying them as “stranded assets”. Rather than associating fossil fuels with a temporal expectancy of continuing asset value growth, being classified as “stranded assets” would redefine them as risky

assets with a diametrically opposed set of institutional prescriptions. Pension funds, for instance, would face normative, and possibly regulatory, prescriptions to avoid investing in fossil fuels because they are likely to suffer premature devaluation in the future.

Moderating factors for temporal expectancies. We argue that the degree to which temporal expectancies ground institutional prescriptions depends on the degree to which those expectancies are supported by social arrangements that make them compelling. We focus on two factors: the embeddedness of temporal expectancies in shared values and in authority structures.

Shared values are important because they endow expectancies with normative force. If we return to the institution of credit, we see it relies on shared values regarding the legitimacy of time-based debt and interest. In many historical societies including Christian and Jewish, and many modern Islamic societies, there were, or are, religious prohibitions on charging interest on a loan, based on the belief that time-based compensation is sinful (Nicolini, Reinecke, & Ismail, 2021). In contrast, modern Western systems of credit rely on a shared belief that charging interest is morally acceptable. Shared beliefs about moral permissibility reinforce the expectancy that borrowers pay interest on a loan, the failure of which (e.g., missing mortgage payments) may be strongly sanctioned (e.g., low credit rating or foreclosure). Following from this, we argue that the embeddedness of temporal expectancies in shared values will increase the degree to which those temporal expectancies stabilize institutional prescriptions.

The second factor that affects the force with which temporal expectancies support institutional prescriptions is the degree to which they are embedded in authority structures. This is because authority structures have the ability to codify temporal expectancies into institutional prescriptions and the sanctioning power to enforce adherence. The case of mandatory disclosures illustrates the importance of authority structures in facilitating the translation of temporal

expectancies into institutional prescriptions. Following lobbying from climate change campaigners such as ClientEarth and policy pressures, the UK Pensions Regulator—a governmental authority—recently translated temporal expectancies emanating from future climate change into new guidance for trustees of occupational pension schemes that requires them to assess and disclose climate risks across their portfolios (DWP, 2021). Thus, we argue that the embeddedness of temporal expectancies in authority structures will increase the degree to which those temporal expectancies stabilize institutional prescriptions.

Temporal mechanisms and the stabilization of institutional participation

The third part of our model describes how temporal mechanisms coordinate, and thereby stabilize, institutional participation. The institutional prescriptions we discussed above encourage action on the part of institutional inhabitants (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006) but do not by themselves provide guidance for participation. Skilled participation, though, is required to enact the temporal patterns and expectancies that stabilize institutional meaning and prescriptions. Temporal mechanisms provide, we argue, the basis for such participation: they allow actors to recreate temporal flows of action across iterations of a social process, such that the process continues in a steady manner. Our focus on the stabilization of participation departs from traditional descriptions of institutional stability in terms of actors' compliance with social structures such as rules or norms; through institutional participation, actors recreate processes and their distinct temporal patterns. Thus, if successful, the translation of temporal mechanisms into institutional participation completes the cycle of institutional stabilization by recreating the temporal patterns that give rise to institutional meaning.

Temporal mechanisms coordinate institutional participation by guiding actors in *how* to participate appropriately in institutions. To take a simple example, participating in a conversation

requires temporal coordination through turn taking (Tavory & Eliasoph, 2013). Failures to coordinate in this way fail to enact the conversation as a conversation. Talking for too long without a break may change the conversation into a monologue; but long gaps between turns may interrupt the flow that makes the conversation meaningful as such. Thus, turn taking is a skilled temporal accomplishment enabled by temporal mechanisms that guide actors' behaviors.

We focus on two specific mechanisms tied to the temporal patterns we described earlier: entrainment, which enacts the institutional prescriptions that flow from rhythms; and encoding, which enacts the institutional prescriptions that flow from temporal depth.

Rhythm entrainment. The first temporal mechanism we consider is entrainment, which coordinates participation with respect to the rhythm of institutions. Entrainment represents the coupling of rhythmic processes with one another or with external pacers (McGrath & Kelly, 1986). It describes the process through which “rhythmic patterns come into alignment” (Bluedorn, 2002: 147). Originally a biological concept, entrainment described how organisms align their biorhythms, as when physiological activity is entrained to circadian rhythms (Adam, 1990). In the social sciences, the concept of entrainment is imbued with a sense of agency (Shipp & Richardson, 2021): it involves an actor adjusting a behavior “to synchronize or to be in cycle or rhythm with another behavior” (Ancona & Chong, 1992: 166). To join in social processes, actors entrain with the rhythm of others, which depends on their “ability to read and embody the experiences of others” (Wheatley, Kang, Parkinson, & Looser, 2012: 594). Failure to entrain can create a temporal misfit or sense of being “out of synch” leading to suboptimal organizational performance (Pérez-Nordtvedt, Payne, Short, & Kedia, 2008). Scholars have studied a wide range of different types of entrainment, including pacer-driven and emergent entrainment (Ancona & Chong, 1992, 1996; Pérez-Nordtvedt et al., 2008). Institutions in which entrainment

depends on an external clock- or event-based pacer include taxation which is entrained to a fiscal or tax year, and a customer's purchasing activity that acts as a pacer for just-in-time inventory delivery. Alternatively, entrainment can occur as a dynamic, endogenous process that depends on interactive, emergent coordination, as in the dinner-table conversation of a large family in which participants align and negotiate in response to each other's spoken and unspoken cues.

Entrainment, through its production of temporally aligned processes, is a key mechanism through which institutions are stabilized. An institution that illustrates the role of entrainment in coordinating institutional participation is the courtroom proceeding. In a study of British Metropolitan magistrates' courts, Carlen (1976: 52) shows how courtroom proceedings are stabilized substantially by entraining the participation of those whose presence is ephemeral (such as witnesses and defendants), with regular participants (such as clerks and judges). This entrainment is accomplished significantly by the court police who manage the rhythm of participation to ensure institutional functioning – to enable “the consecutive appearance of 20 or 30 defendants at one court session” alongside witnesses, jury members, judges, or attorneys who must all appear at the right time. The cumulative effect of this multi-layered entrainment across actors and activities is the stabilization of the institution in the form of a smoothly functioning, ever-evolving social process; in contrast, collectively failing to entrain could create widespread disruption among interconnected processes.

Temporal depth encoding. The encoding of temporal depth coordinates and stabilizes institutional participation in relation to temporal depth expectancies. Broadly, the concept of encoding describes translating and embedding social phenomena – such as patterns of action and meanings – from one social context to another. Temporal depth encoding thus describes translating and embedding the past or future into the present (Abbott, 2016; Emirbayer &

Mische, 1998). This might involve remembering (or forgetting) the past, or anticipating (or bracketing) the future, thus encoding an institution’s temporal depth into the present.

Temporal depth encoding plays a stabilizing role by providing a basis for people to coordinate their institutional participation in ways that are consistent with institutional prescriptions: people demonstrate their ability to engage in patterns of institutionally meaningful interaction by recognizing and reproducing relationships to the past and future. Institutional participation in religious or social rituals, for instance, often depends on recreating historical events in the present thereby maintaining the relationship to the past through which the ritual derives its meaning (Dacin & Dacin, 2008; Dacin et al., 2010). More generally, people encode the past “moment by moment, into the present, the only place where it can influence or shape events” (Abbott, 2016: 75). Lok and de Rond (2013) show how stabilization of the annual Cambridge and Oxford Boat Race depended on actors encoding its 175-year history into each season, race, and training session. This was, however, far from the automatic reproduction of an institutional script: frequent breakdowns in practices necessitated encoding new versions of history that would stabilize the institution by supporting changes in technical and social practices. Temporal depth encoding thus does not preserve a stable past but instead translates versions of the past into the present in response to continuously changing circumstances (Schultz & Hernes, 2013). Institutional participation is also coordinated through temporal encoding of the future as actors engage in the institutional present (Tavory & Eliasoph, 2013: 936). One way in which people encode the future into the present is by constructing “trajectories” that describe potential future paths that actors are taking (Tavory & Eliasoph, 2013). This form of encoding and its potential significance as a temporal mechanism is demonstrated by the shift in how terrorism trials were conducted in the United States following 9/11. Whereas traditional criminal

1
2
3 law was premised on responding to past harms, terrorism laws enacted after 9/11, 2001,
4
5 dramatically shifted the temporal depth encoding associated with prosecuting terrorism.
6
7 Terrorism trials became “performative space[s] where potential future terror [was] imagined,
8
9 invoked, contested, and made real” (de Goede & de Graaf, 2013: 313). Behaviors including
10
11 “conversations, telephone calls, or the purchase of completely legal goods” were re-encoded as
12
13 preparatory activities for potential terrorism and linked to “possible future violence” (de Goede
14
15 & de Graaf, 2013: 316).
16
17

18
19 ***Moderating factors for temporal mechanisms.*** As with the previous elements of our
20
21 model, we propose a set of factors that affect the strength of the relationship between temporal
22
23 mechanisms and institutional participation. Here, we highlight two forms of interdependence.
24
25

26 The first form of interdependence we consider is *across* processes, which shapes the costs
27
28 and benefits of entrainment across institutional participants. Participants in highly interdependent
29
30 processes benefit more from entrainment, and suffer more from failure to entrain than those in
31
32 loosely coupled processes (Shipp & Richardson, 2021). This dynamic is illustrated by the impact
33
34 of “Moore’s Law” as a driver of entrainment in the 1990s computer industry (Demil, Leca, &
35
36 Naccache, 2005). In this period, industry participants were motivated to entrain their innovation
37
38 cycles with Intel’s microprocessor technology developments. These were understood to advance
39
40 at a rate known as “Moore’s Law”—the prediction made by Intel co-founder Gordon Moore in
41
42 1965 that the number of transistors on a silicon chip doubles every year (later revised to every
43
44 two years) (Demil et al., 2005; Eisenhardt & Brown, 1998). A significant factor that strengthened
45
46 the relationship between entrainment with Moore’s Law and institutional participation was the
47
48 interdependence among computer chip developers and manufacturers: the success of hardware
49
50 systems and software products was dependent on their compatibility with Intel’s processors; in
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

turn, Intel was motivated to reproduce the “Law” by producing new chips on the anticipated schedule, such that the release of the chips was synchronized with the release of other firms’ complementary products (Eisenhardt & Brown, 1998). Thus, we argue that interdependence between processes increases the degree to which mechanisms stabilize institutional participation.

The second form of interdependence we consider – intertemporal interdependence – amplifies the impact of temporal depth encoding on institutional participation across time. A transparent example of intertemporal interdependence is provided by financial market institutions. As we previously argued, the institution of credit is a fictitious, intertemporal construct which would lose all significance if it was cut off from its intertemporal ties: thus, participating in it (e.g., taking out a loan) requires ongoing encoding of the past (one’s historic credit rating) and future (interest payments, a repayment plan, etc.). A similarly high intertemporal interdependence is presented in the legal profession. In common law jurisdictions in particular, any new judgement has the potential to shape future law by setting a new precedent, making it an ongoing evolution where past, present, and future judgements become highly intertwined. Ongoing re-encoding of past and future judgements is a central part of what enables participation. Thus, we argue that intertemporal interdependence between processes increases the degree to which temporal mechanisms stabilize institutional participation.

DISCUSSION

Our aim in this paper is to explore the role of temporality in institutional stabilization. Applying a process ontology, we developed a theoretical model that explains how institutional meanings, prescriptions, and participation are each stabilized by a facet of temporality and together stabilize institutions as ever-becoming yet enduring social processes. To conclude, we examine the implications of our arguments for three key issues for institutional scholars: the role of temporality; the role of agency; and the role of process.

Implications for temporality and institutions

At its core, our model relocates temporality in relation to institutions—from standing outside institutions and serving as a marker of their evolution (Amis et al., 2004; Dacin, Goodstein, & Scott, 2002; Lawrence et al., 2001) to sitting inside institutions as a “foundational element” (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016: 1009; Weik, 2019). The temporal qualities of institutions—temporal patterns, expectancies, and mechanisms—deepen the vocabulary available to institutional scholars to describe, distinguish, and explain institutions. Whereas institutional research has tended to rely on structural and spatial metaphors (focusing, for instance, on their diffusion or plasticity), future research would benefit from exploring how institutions vary in temporal terms. Our focus on rhythm and temporal depth as foundational temporal patterns illustrate the potential for the analysis of a wider range of temporal patterns associated with institutions, including sequencing, finitude, and cyclicity. Such a shift would not only shed light on the dynamics of more obviously temporal institutions such as those around climate change (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015) and financial markets (Beckert, 2021), but highlight overlooked institutions that may only be recognized as such when one focuses on enduring temporal qualities: processes often conceived of as episodic (e.g., political reform, organizational restructuring, field-level disruptions, radical innovation) might be approached as institutions for which meaning, prescriptions, and participation are defined significantly by their temporal qualities. For example, like Donahue and Pollack’s (2001) analysis of the rhythms of federalism, institutional scholars might explore organizational restructuring as an ever becoming, oscillating process rather than a shift from one stable state to another, with pauses that mark moments of oscillation rather than the achievement of a new equilibrium.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

An important implication of relocating temporality as a part of, rather than outside, institutions concerns the relationship between temporality and the dynamics of institutions. Previous research on time and institutions has tied temporality to change, as a potential facilitator (Amis et al., 2004; Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016) or a measure of institutional change processes (Lawrence et al., 2001). Although consideration of time is often connected to “questions about how and why things emerge, develop, grow, or terminate” (Langley et al., 2013: 1), time is equally implicated in understanding how things persist or endure. Conceiving of temporality as a fundamental quality of institutions, rather than a potential lever sitting outside institutions, highlights its role in the stabilization of institutions: it allows us to consider linkages through which specific dimensions of institutions are stabilized by facets of temporality, as well as conditions that affect when and why temporal qualities have a greater stabilizing effect.

Research opportunities emerge from the specific connections we identify between particular institutional dimensions and facets of temporality. Although the theoretical model we developed is holistic—suggesting a recursive loop involving multiple institutional dimensions and facets of temporality—much could be gained from studying its individual parts. Exploring the link between institutional participation and the temporal mechanisms of entrainment and encoding could enrich the current stream of research that is beginning to explore institutional participation (Creed et al., 2020) and as part of inhabited institutions (Hallett & Hawbaker, 2020): it could, for instance, inform research on how people’s encoding of the past and/or future (for instance, in terms of past nostalgia or future hopes and dreams) animates participation in certain institutional arrangements. Similarly, examining the link between temporal expectancies and institutional prescriptions could breathe new life into the study of systems of institutional control which has languished somewhat since it was the focus of specific interest (Jepperson,

1991; Phillips et al., 2000). Moving away from the traditional view of institutions as accomplished rule systems that are reproduced by actors avoiding costs of noncompliance (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004), our model draws attention to the temporal mechanisms that guide participation thus recreating flows of action across iterations of a social process.

Future research could also expand our model by focusing on the relationships between these different stabilizing processes and exploring variability across the three dimensions. This could provide valuable insight into how destabilization of one temporal facet might affect the stabilization of others—a dynamic likely to play out in complex social arenas such as sustainability. For instance, temporal expectancies about planetary boundaries and associated tipping points destabilize taken-for-granted assumptions about infinite economic growth. Still, much institutional participation is based on an unsustainable entrainment with economic growth trajectories that outpace nature's regeneration. Scholars could thus study how actors reconfigure their institutional participation when it moves “out of synch” with new institutional meanings, for instance, by resisting participation—as seen in Fridays4Future's resistance to encodings of the future or Extinction Rebellion's disruption of everyday entrainment with the capitalist rhythms of large cities. These mis-alignments might also motivate efforts to re-align stabilizing processes or, in contrast, to engage in “temporal decoupling” (Blagoev & Schreyögg, 2019) as ways to manage the temporal discrepancies between different institutional dimensions.

Finally, two limitations of our model suggest important future research directions. Our model links a moderating factor (observability, embeddedness, and interdependence) to the impact of a specific facet of temporality (patterns, expectancies, mechanisms). Our intention in doing so was to construct a tractable model, but the broader effects of those moderators represent a potentially valuable focus for future research. The embeddedness in values or authority

structures, for instance, might also affect how temporal patterns stabilize institutional meaning or how temporal mechanisms stabilize institutional participation. Similarly, while our model focuses on the stabilization of one institution, an important issue concerns the role of temporality in the stabilization of networks of institutions. Social life involves interacting with and participating in multiple institutions with differing temporalities, and so scholars examining institutional complexity might explore how temporal coordination and conflict shape the stabilization of ecologies of institutions. Temporal coordination across institutions might involve negotiating different rhythms and different relationships to the past, present, and future.

Implications for agency and institutions

The image of institutional stabilization we propose has important implications for how we render the relationship between agency and institutions (Battilana & D’Aunno, 2009). Whereas institutional research has tended to separate unintended effects of action on institutions from intentional institutional work (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006), particularly in relationship to institutional maintenance (Micelotta & Washington, 2013; Trank & Washington, 2009), our model suggests a more nuanced understanding in which stabilization involves skilled, legitimate participation on the part of institutional actors on an ongoing basis: the social construction of institutional meaning depends on sensemaking and sensegiving by knowledgeable actors capable of interpreting temporal patterns in institutional terms; the establishment of institutional prescriptions similarly depends on actors with political will and skill to translate temporal expectancies into forceful, legitimate prescriptions; and the enactment of temporal mechanisms, such as entrainment and encoding, into institutional participation depends on motivated, knowledgeable institutional actors. At the same time, these processes do not require an actor’s motivation to be explicitly oriented toward stabilizing the institution. Temporal work undertaken

1
2
3 to deliberately shape temporal phenomena (Bansal, Reinecke, Suddaby, & Langley, 2022) may
4
5 be motivated by local, idiosyncratic concerns for institutional meaning, control, and action that
6
7 stop short of a reflexive concern for the institution as a whole. Thus, institutional stabilization
8
9 depends on neither cultural dopes unaware of the impacts of their own actions, nor hyper-aware
10
11 agents working to maintain the institution.
12
13

14
15 Nevertheless, the dynamism inherent in institutional stabilization also offers the
16
17 opportunity for actors to strategically shape the evolution of institutions through temporal
18
19 institutional work (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016). The relationship of different actors to
20
21 different institutional dimensions opens space for stabilization to incorporate divergent
22
23 motivations and interpretations of the situation, such that actors may work to both stabilize the
24
25 institution and bend its evolution toward their own interests. The agency exhibited in cycles of
26
27 institutional stabilization may be oriented toward temporal patterns, expectancies, or
28
29 mechanisms. Temporality is thus not only a driver of institutional change (e.g., by exploiting
30
31 windows of opportunity and temporal norms (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016)), but can be a
32
33 direct target of efforts to shape the temporal qualities of institutions themselves. Work to shape
34
35 temporal patterns, for instance, might focus on the rhythm of an institution, not to accelerate the
36
37 process of change, but to shift the meaning of the institution—as in the shift from fast food to
38
39 slow food, which is concerned with the meaning of food in social life (van Bommel & Spicer,
40
41 2011). Similarly, work to shape temporal mechanisms, such as entrainment, is not just about
42
43 enrolling allies in a change process (Schüssler, Rüling, & Wittneben, 2014), but also the nature
44
45 of institutional participation by stabilizing (or destabilizing) certain forms of participation.
46
47
48
49
50

51 Identifying elements of temporality that contribute to institutional stabilization and
52
53 factors that affect these relationships thus opens a range of opportunities for exploring
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

heterogeneous forms of institutional agency. Research could examine, for instance, how actors work to enhance or obscure temporal contrasts, or render temporal scales more or less compatible with participants and their abilities, thus affecting institutional meaning. Similarly scholars could draw on research temporal complexity and temporal clashes (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015) to investigate how increasing or decreasing the interdependence of processes affects the ability of temporal mechanisms to guide institutional participation. Future work can also expand on the factors that shape the link between temporal facets and institutional dimensions. Scholars examining the interplay of materiality and temporality have pointed to the temporal affordances and constraints of material-based practices (Hernes, Feddersen, & Schultz, 2021; Nicolini et al., 2021). For instance, nature’s temporality as apparent in climate change and regeneration becomes a significant factor affecting the degree to which actors can manipulate certain temporal facets to shape institutions.

More broadly, the implications of our arguments for understanding agency and institutions can provide a novel foundation for studying institutional change. Conceptions of institutions as stable, enduring social structures (Scott, 2013) underpinned the emergence of institutional change as an arena of interest in the 1980s and 1990s, which tended to be dominated by stage models describing shifts between equilibrium states (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). While more recent, practice-driven approaches have argued that institutional change accumulates gradually through “improvisations in everyday work” (Smets, Morris, & Greenwood, 2012: 877), our arguments go further by suggesting that institutional change never stops. Instead, it involves continuous efforts to stabilize and destabilize institutions by affecting facets of temporality, thus shaping institutional trajectories. For instance, the central element of promoting an economic transition to a net-zero carbon economy involves a complex

temporal reconfiguration from a linear take-make-use-dispose sequence to a circular economy, alongside a significant expansion in future orientation. This requires the ongoing renegotiation of temporal alignment in pace, rhythm and temporal depth among myriad industry and supply chain participants to ensure that materials flow in an infinitely recursive cycle and reduce future environmental degradation. Thus, from our perspective, investigating institutional change should explore ongoing efforts to nudge the unfolding of institutions, rather than focus on dramatic attempts to transform institutions and ensure those changes “stick”.

Finally, we are not suggesting that temporality is the only dimension through which institutional agency can be understood. Its distinctive significance is grounded in our process view of institutions which conceptualizes temporality as intrinsic to institutions. Thus, to participate in a process requires some level of temporal awareness and coordination. But institutions are undoubtedly shaped by an array of factors beyond temporality (Hampel, Lawrence, & Tracey, 2017): scholars could thus explore the role that materiality, space (Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Rodner, Roulet, Kerrigan, & vom Lehn, 2019) or emotions (Creed et al., 2014; Zietsma & Toubiana, 2018) play in stabilizing the different dimensions of institutions we identified.

Implications for process and institutions

Although the core ideas associated with process and institutional theories may seem in tension—with the former focusing on flux and emergence and the latter focused on stability—we see them as ideal complements. Adopting a process ontology involves seeing social life as ever becoming (Hernes, 2017; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Weik, 2019) but this shift makes institutions especially important: it is the pockets of durability and predictability constructed amidst the flux of social life that are especially interesting because they represent distinctive achievements.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Whereas change is to be explained from an entitative perspective, it is “objects” carved out of process through ongoing stabilization that require explanation within a process ontology. Our examining the role of temporality in institutional stabilization thus suggests to us the potential limitations of this “weak-strong” dichotomy: although writing from a strong process view has usefully elevated the language of flow, flux, becoming, and emergence (Chia, 2002; Nayak & Chia, 2011; Reay et al., 2019) it may have overlooked the significance of “objects” constructed from and within the flux of organizational life (Lawrence & Phillips, 2019). Moreover, it may have too quickly pushed aside the skilled, knowledgeable agents whose efforts are central to ensuring the ongoingness of processes and which, at least in part, steer their becoming.

Directions for future research that flow from our model stem both from our specific arguments and the more general understanding of institutional stabilization embedded in our model. The specific linkages we identify—from facets of temporality to dimensions of institutions, moderated by contextual conditions—could provide clear guidance for empirical research. Examining the relationships we propose would benefit from relatively intimate research that gets close to peoples’ experiences within processes as they navigate the flux of institutional life and work to shape facets of temporality and stabilize or destabilize institutions. The relationships we propose would also benefit from comparative processual research that systematically examined how, for instance, variations in the rhythm and temporal depth of institutions shaped the sensemaking of institutional actors and led to the construction of different meanings. The same kinds of questions could be explored in relationship to each of the dimensions on which our model focuses.

Our theoretical model also suggests a broader shift in studies of institutional stabilization: rather than focus on episodes of maintenance triggered by discrete threats as has been the

dominant strategy, our model suggests the value of exploring stabilization as an ongoing cycle, which would demand different approaches to gathering and analyzing data, as well as developing the research questions that guide those processes. Evidence of stabilization would be found in the ongoing practices of institutional members through which they interpret temporal patterns, translate temporal expectancies into prescriptions, and enact temporal mechanisms. This would lead to methodological strategies that favor naturalistic observation so that ongoing temporal practices might captured, as illustrated in Geiger and colleagues' (2021) ethnographic study of the rhythms of firefighters' routines. More generally, studying and theorizing institutions needs to examine temporality as an intrinsic part of the unfolding processes being studied (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017; Thompson, 2011) so as to avoid "freezing" the institutional world into representable snapshots that attribute stable, entitative existence to ever becoming social processes. This suggests a focus on surfacing the institutional role of temporality even in contexts in which temporality is not evidently important.

Concluding thoughts

Perhaps our most important contribution lies in our effort to craft an image of institutions that is resonant with people's lived experience in a social world characterized by both continuous change and ongoing attempts at stabilization. As Bauman (2000: viii, 82) argues, we live under conditions of "liquidity" and with "the growing conviction that change is the only permanence" with "no 'final state' in sight and none desired". Under such conditions, the central question becomes how continuity is achieved in the social world. By theorizing the role of temporality in institutional stabilization, we have provided one explanation. In doing so, our arguments dissolve the dichotomous view of institutional change and stability that underpins structural conceptions of institutions. While much of institutional theorizing has centered on the relationship between

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

change and stability, our theorizing demonstrates how institutions can be conceptualized as ongoing processes that are stabilized by temporal patterns, expectancies, and mechanisms. From this perspective, institutional becoming and stabilization go hand in hand while surfacing the purposeful efforts of institutional participants to shape and direct trajectories of becoming.

The relevance of such a view has become more evident since the 2020 COVID pandemic. Most of the world’s population experienced an upheaval and disruption of daily life at a scale rarely seen in peace time—yet one that is perhaps anticipatory of the impact of future climate catastrophes. In efforts to stabilize taken-for-granted institutions of daily life, the temporal dimension has become more important as other dimensions, such as the spatial separation of work and home, have become less available due to social distancing and stay-at-home orders. Achieving continuity has largely centered on the re-creation of temporal patterns; consequently, the temporal dimension that underpins participation in the institutional world has become more obviously prominent. “Going home” became a matter of ending one’s endless Zoom calls. Attending an academic conference became a matter of temporal coordination rather than spatial movement and physical interaction. More generally, as we face further upheaval due to climate catastrophe, human conflict and the unintended consequences of mass digitalization, a process ontology of the institutional world that presupposes ongoing change may provide an appropriate conceptual foundation for understanding the challenges of stabilizing ever-changing social life.

REFERENCES

- Abbott, A. 2016. *Processual sociology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Abbott, A. D. 2001. *Time matters: On theory and method*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Adam, B. 1990. *Time and social theory*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Amis, J., Slack, T., & Hinings, C. R. 2004. The pace, sequence, and linearity of radical change. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(1): 15–39.
- Ancona, D. G., & Chong, C.-L. 1992. Timing is everything: Entrainment and performance in organization theory. *Best Papers Proceedings*, 166–169. Presented at the Academy of Management.
- Ancona, D. L., & Chong, C.-L. 1996. Entrainment: Pace, cycle, and rhythm in organizational behavior. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 18: 251–284.
- Bansal, P., Kim, A., & Wood, M. O. 2018. Hidden in plain sight: The importance of scale in organizations' attention to issues. *Academy of Management Review*, 43(2): 217–241.
- Bansal, P. (Tima), Reinecke, J., Suddaby, R., & Langley, A. 2022. Temporal Work: The Strategic Organization of Time. *Strategic Organization*, 20(1): 6–19.
- Battilana, J., & D'Aunno, T. A. 2009. Institutional work and the paradox of embedded agency. In T. B. Lawrence, R. Suddaby, & B. Leca (Eds.), *Institutional work: Actors and agency in institutional studies of organizations*: 31–58. Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press.
- Bauman, Z. 2000. *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Beckert, J. 2013a. Imagined futures: Fictional expectations in the economy. *Theory and Society*, 42(3): 219–240.

Beckert, J. 2013b. Capitalism as a system of expectations: Toward a sociological microfoundation of political economy. *Politics & Society*, 41(3): 323–350.

Beckert, J. 2021. The firm as an engine of imagination: Organizational prospection and the making of economic futures. *Organization Theory*, 2(2).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/26317877211005773>.

Bergson, H. 1910. *Time and free will: An essay on the immediate data of consciousness*. (F. L. Pogson, Tran.). London, UK: George Allen and Unwin.

Berry, W. 1987. *Structural functions in music*. New York: Dover.

Blagoev, B., & Schreyögg, G. 2019. Why Do Extreme Work Hours Persist? Temporal Uncoupling as a New Way of Seeing. *Academy of Management Journal*, 62(6): 1818–1847.

Bluedorn, A. C. 2002. *The human organization of time: Temporal realities and experience*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Carlen, P. 1976. The staging of magistrates’ justice. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 16(1): 48–55.

Chia, R. 1999. A ‘rhizomic’ model of organizational change and transformation: Perspective from a metaphysics of change. *British Journal of Management*, 10(3): 209–227.

Chia, R. 2002. Essai: Time, duration and simultaneity: rethinking process and change in organizational analysis. *Organization Studies*, 23(6): 863–868.

Creed, W. E. D., Hudson, B. A., Okhuysen, G. A., & Smith-Crowe, K. 2014. Swimming in a sea of shame: Incorporating emotion into explanations of institutional reproduction and change. *Academy of Management Review*, 39(3): 275–301.

- Creed, W. E. D., Hudson, B. A., Okhuysen, G. A., & Smith-Crowe, K. 2020. A place in the world: Vulnerability, wellbeing, and the ubiquitous evaluation that animates participation in institutional processes. *Academy of Management Review*.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2018.0367>.
- Dacin, M. T., & Dacin, P. A. 2008. Traditions as institutionalized practice: Implications for deinstitutionalization. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *Sage handbook of organizational institutionalism*: 327–351. London: Sage.
- Dacin, M. T., Goodstein, J., & Scott, W. R. 2002. Institutional theory and institutional change: Introduction to the special research forum. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45(1): 43–56.
- Dacin, M. T., Munir, K., & Tracey, P. 2010. Formal dining at Cambridge colleges: Linking ritual performance and institutional maintenance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(6): 1393–1418.
- de Goede, M., & de Graaf, B. 2013. Sentencing risk: Temporality and precaution in terrorism trials. *International Political Sociology*, 7(3): 313–331.
- Demil, B., Leca, B., & Naccache, P. 2005. Inter organizational temporal coordination in organizational fields: The concept of temporal institution. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 2005: H1–H6. Presented at the Academy of Management.
- Donahue, J. D., & Pollack, M. A. 2001. Rhythms of federalism in the United States and the European Union. In K. Nicolaidis & R. Howse (Eds.), *The Federal Vision: Legitimacy and levels of governance in the United States and the European Union*: 73–117. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Dover, G., & Lawrence, T. B. 2010. Technology, institutions and entropy: Understanding the critical and creative role of maintenance work. *Technology and organization: Essays in honour of Joan Woodward.*, vol. 29: 259–264. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.

DWP. 2021. *Governance and reporting of climate change risk: Guidance for trustees of occupational schemes.* UK Department for Work and Pensions.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1006024/statutory-guidance-final-revised.pdf#page=36.

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Brown, S. L. 1998. Time pacing: Competing in markets that won't stand still. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(2): 59–69.

Elias, N. 1984. *Über die zeit.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. 1998. What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4): 962–1023.

Farjoun, M. 2010. Beyond dualism: Stability and change as a duality. *Academy of Management Review*, 35(2): 202–225.

Flaherty, M., & Fine, G. A. 2001. Present, past, and future: Conjugating George Herbert Mead's perspective on time. *Time & Society*, 10(2–3): 147–161.

Garfinkel, H. 2002. *Ethnomethodology's program: Working out Durkheim's aphorism.* (A. W. Rawls, Ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Geiger, D., Danner-Schröder, A., & Kremser, W. 2021. Getting ahead of time—Performing temporal boundaries to coordinate routines under temporal uncertainty. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 66(1): 220–264.

- Gill, M. J., & Burrow, R. 2018. The function of fear in institutional maintenance: Feeling frightened as an essential ingredient in haute cuisine. *Organization Studies*, 39(4): 445–465.
- Granqvist, N., & Gustafsson, R. 2016. Temporal institutional work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(3): 1009–1035.
- Greenwood, R., Raynard, M., Kodeih, F., Micelotta, E. R., & Lounsbury, M. 2011. Institutional complexity and organizational responses. *Academy of Management Annals*, 5(1): 317–371.
- Greenwood, R., Suddaby, R., & Hinings, C. R. 2002. Theorizing change: The role of professional associations in the transformation of institutionalized fields. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45(1): 58–80.
- Hallett, T. 2010. The myth incarnate: Recoupling processes, turmoil, and inhabited institutions in an urban elementary school. *American Sociological Review*, 75(1): 52–74.
- Hallett, T., & Hawbaker, A. 2020. The case for an inhabited institutionalism in organizational research: Interaction, coupling, and change reconsidered. *Theory and Society*, 50: 1–32.
- Hallett, T., & Ventresca, M. J. 2006. Inhabited institutions: Social interactions and organizational forms in Gouldner's "Patterns of industrial bureaucracy." *Theory and Society*, 35(2): 213–236.
- Hampel, C. E., Lawrence, T. B., & Tracey, P. 2017. Institutional work: Taking stock and making it matter. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T. B. Lawrence, & R. E. Meyer (Eds.), *SAGE Handbook of organizational institutionalism* (2nd ed.): 558–590. London, UK: SAGE.
- Hernes, T. 2014. *A process theory of organization*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Hernes, T. 2017. Process as the becoming of temporal trajectory. In A. Langley & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of process organization studies*: 601–607. London, UK: SAGE Publications.

Hernes, T., Feddersen, J., & Schultz, M. 2021. Material temporality: How materiality ‘does’ time in food organizing. *Organization Studies*, 42(2): 351–371.

Hernes, T., & Schultz, M. 2020. Translating the distant into the present: How actors address distant past and future events through situated activity. *Organization Theory*, 1(1): 1–20.

Höllerer, M. A., Daudigeos, T., & Jancsary, D. 2017. Multimodality, meaning, and institutions: Editorial. In M. A. Höllerer, T. Daudigeos, & D. Jancsary (Eds.), *Multimodality, meaning, and institutions*, vol. 54A: 1–24. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited.

Hughes, E. C. 1936. The ecological aspect of institutions. *American Sociological Review*, 1(2): 180–189.

James, W. 1909. *A pluralistic universe: Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College on the present situation in philosophy*.

Jepperson, R. L. 1991. Institutions, institutional effects, and institutionalism. In W. W. Powell & P. J. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*: 143–63. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jones, C. 2001. Co-evolution of entrepreneurial careers, institutional rules and competitive dynamics in American film, 1895-1920. *Organization Studies*, 22(6): 911–944.

Kraatz, M. S., & Flores, R. 2015. Reinfusing values. In M. S. Kraatz (Ed.), *Institutions and ideals: Philip Selznick’s legacy for organizational studies*, vol. 44: 353–381. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

- Kunisch, S., Bartunek, J. M., Mueller, J., & Huy, Q. N. 2017. Time in strategic change research. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(2): 1005–1064.
- Langley, A., Smallman, C., Tsoukas, H., & Van de Ven, A. H. 2013. Process studies of change in organization and management: Unveiling temporality, activity, and flow. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(1): 1–13.
- Lawrence, T. B., & Dover, G. 2015. Place and institutional work: Creating housing for the hard-to-house. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 60(3): 371–410.
- Lawrence, T. B., & Phillips, N. 2019. *Constructing organizational life: How social-symbolic work shapes selves, organizations, and institutions*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lawrence, T. B., & Suddaby, R. 2006. Institutions and institutional work. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, T. B. Lawrence, & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of organization studies* (2nd ed.): 215–254. London: Sage.
- Lawrence, T. B., Winn, M. I., & Jennings, P. D. 2001. The temporal dynamics of institutionalization. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(4): 624–644.
- Leibel, E., Hallett, T., & Bechky, B. A. 2018. Meaning at the source: The dynamics of field formation in institutional research. *Academy of Management Annals*, 12(1): 154–177.
- Lewis, J., & Cushion, S. 2009. The thirst to be first. *Journalism Practice*, 3(3): 304–318.
- Lok, J., & de Rond, M. 2013. On the plasticity of institutions: Containing and restoring practice breakdowns at the Cambridge University Boat Club. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(1): 185–207.
- Maguire, S., & Hardy, C. 2009. Discourse and deinstitutionalization: The decline of DDT. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(1): 148–178.

McGrath, J. E., & Kelly, J. R. 1986. *Time and human interaction: Toward a social psychology of time*. Guilford Press.

Mead, G. 1932. *The philosophy of the present*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mead, G. H. 1964. *On social psychology: Selected papers*. (A. L. Strauss, Ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Meyer, R. E. 2019. A processual view on institutions: A note from a phenomenological institutional perspective. In T. Reay, T. B. Zilber, A. Langley, & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), *Institutions and organizations: A process view*, vol. 9: 33–41. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Micelotta, E. R., & Washington, M. 2013. Institutions and maintenance: The repair work of Italian professions. *Organization Studies*, 34(8): 1137–1170.

Mohr, J. W. 1998. Measuring meaning structures. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24: 345–370.

Nayak, A., & Chia, R. 2011. Thinking becoming and emergence: Process philosophy and organization studies. In H. Tsoukas & R. Chia (Eds.), *Philosophy and organization theory*, vol. 32: 281–309. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Nicolini, D., Reinecke, J., & Ismail, M. A. 2021. You’re Grounded! Toward a Theory of Enactive Legitimation, Materiality and Practice. In M. Lounsbury, D. A. Anderson, & P. Spee (Eds.), *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*: 87–115. Emerald Publishing Limited.

OED Online. 2021, June. federal, adj. And n. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. www.oed.com/view/Entry/68921.

Orlikowski, W. J., & Yates, J. 2002. It’s about time: Temporal structuring in organizations. *Organization Science*, 13(6): 684–700.

- Pérez-Nordtvedt, L., Payne, G. T., Short, J. C., & Kedia, B. L. 2008. An entrainment-based model of temporal organizational fit, misfit, and performance. *Organization Science*, 19(5): 785–801.
- Phillips, N., Lawrence, T. B., & Hardy, C. 2000. Inter-organizational collaboration and the dynamics of institutional fields. *Journal of Management Studies*, 37(1): 23–43.
- Phillips, N., Lawrence, T. B., & Hardy, C. 2004. Discourse and institutions. *Academy of Management Review*, 29(4): 635–652.
- Phillips, N., & Malhotra, N. 2008. Taking social construction seriously: Extending the discursive approach in institutional theory. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *Sage handbook of organizational institutionalism*: 702–720. London: Sage.
- Raffaelli, R., & Glynn, M. A. 2015. What's so institutional about leadership? Leadership mechanisms of value infusion. In M. S. Kraatz (Ed.), *Institutions and ideals: Philip Selznick's legacy for organizational studies*, vol. 44: 283–316. Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Reay, T., Zilber, T. B., Langley, A., & Tsoukas, H. 2019. Introduction: Institutions and organizations: A process view. In T. Reay, T. B. Zilber, A. Langley, & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), *Institutions and organizations: A process view*, vol. 9: 1. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Reinecke, J., & Ansari, S. 2015. When times collide: Temporal brokerage at the intersection of markets and developments. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58(2): 618–648.
- Reinecke, J., & Ansari, S. 2017. Time, temporality and process studies. In A. Langley & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of process organization studies*: 402–416. London, UK: SAGE.

Rodner, V., Roulet, T. J., Kerrigan, F., & vom Lehn, D. 2019. Making space for art: A spatial perspective of disruptive and defensive institutional work in Venezuela’s art world. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(4): 1054–1081.

Schatzki, T. R. 2001. Introduction: Practice theory. In T. R. Schatzki, K. Knorr Cetina, & E. Von Savigny (Eds.), *The practice turn in contemporary theory*: 1–14. London: Routledge.

Schreyögg, G., & Sydow, J. 2010. Organizing for fluidity? Dilemmas of new organizational forms. *Organization Science*, 21(6): 1251–1262.

Schultz, M., & Hernes, T. 2013. A temporal perspective on organizational identity. *Organization Science*, 24(1): 1–21.

Schüssler, E., Rüling, C.-C., & Wittneben, B. B. 2014. On melting summits: The limitations of field-configuring events as catalysts of change in transnational climate policy. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57(1): 140–171.

Scott, W. R. 2013. *Institutions and organizations: Ideas, interests and identities* (4th ed.). London: SAGE.

Selznick, P. 2011. *Leadership in administration: A sociological interpretation* (Digital). New Orleans: Quid Pro.

Shipp, A. J., & Richardson, H. A. 2021. The impact of temporal schemata: Understanding when individuals entrain versus resist or create temporal structure. *Academy of Management Review*, 46(2): 299–319.

Slawinski, N., & Bansal, P. 2012. A matter of time: The temporal perspectives of organizational responses to climate change. *Organization Studies*, 33(11): 1537–1563.

Slawinski, N., & Bansal, P. 2015. Short on time: Intertemporal tensions in business sustainability. *Organization Science*, 26(2): 531–549.

- Smets, M., Morris, T., & Greenwood, R. 2012. From practice to field: A multilevel model of practice-driven institutional change. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(4): 877–904.
- Steele, C. W. J. 2021. When things get odd: Exploring the interactional choreography of taken-for-grantedness. *Academy of Management Review*, 46(2): 341–361.
- Suddaby, R., Elsbach, K. D., Greenwood, R., Meyer, J. W., & Zilber, T. B. 2010. Organizations and their institutional environments—Bringing meaning, values, and culture back in. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 53(6): 1234–1240.
- Tavory, I., & Eliasoph, N. 2013. Coordinating futures: Toward a theory of anticipation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 118(4): 908–942.
- Thompson, M. 2011. Ontological shift or ontological drift? Reality claims, epistemological frameworks, and theory generation in organization studies. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(4): 754–773.
- Tolbert, P. S., & Zucker, L. G. 1996. The institutionalization of institutional theory. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of organization studies*: 175–190. London: Sage.
- Trank, C. Q., & Washington, M. 2009. Maintaining an institution in a contested organizational field: The work of AACSB and its constituents. In T. B. Lawrence, R. Suddaby, & B. Leca (Eds.), *Institutional work: Actors and agency in institutional studies of organizations*: 236–261. Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press.
- Tsoukas, H., & Chia, R. 2002. On organizational becoming: Rethinking organizational change. *Organization Science*, 13(5): 567–582.
- van Bommel, K., & Spicer, A. 2011. Hail the snail: Hegemonic struggles in the slow food movement. *Organization Studies*, 32(12): 1717–1744.

Weik, E. 2019. Understanding institutional endurance: The role of dynamic form, harmony and rhythm in institutions. *Academy of Management Review*, 44(2): 321–335.

Wheatley, T., Kang, O., Parkinson, C., & Looser, C. E. 2012. From mind perception to mental connection: Synchrony as a mechanism for social understanding. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 6(8): 589–606.

Whitehead, A. N. 1929. *The function of reason*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Whitehead, A. N. 1985. *Process and Reality*. New York: The Free Press.

Wiebe, E. 2010. Temporal sensemaking: Managers’ use of time to frame organizational change. In T. Hernes & S. Maitlis (Eds.), *Process, sensemaking, and organizing*: 213–241. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Wright, A. L., Meyer, A. D., Reay, T., & Staggs, J. 2020. Maintaining places of social inclusion: Ebola and the emergency department. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 0001839220916401.

Zerubavel, E. 1976. Timetables and scheduling: On the social organization of time. *Sociological Inquiry*, 46(2): 87–94.

Zerubavel, E. 1981. *Hidden rhythms: Schedules and calendars in social life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Zerubavel, E. 1987. The language of time: Toward a semiotics of temporality. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 28(3): 343–356.

Zietsma, C., & Toubiana, M. 2018. The valuable, the constitutive, and the energetic: Exploring the impact and importance of studying emotions and institutions. *Organization Studies*, 39(4): 427–443.

Zilber, T. B. 2009. Institutional maintenance as narrative acts. In T. B. Lawrence, R. Suddaby, & B. Leca (Eds.), *Institutional work: Actors and agency in institutional studies of organizations*: 205–235. Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press.

FIGURE 1: WEAK VERSUS STRONG PROCESS VIEW OF INSTITUTIONS

	Weak process view	Strong process view
Ontology	Entitative ontology: Process as sequence	Process ontology: Process as flow
Epistemology	Process	Process
Process and institutions	Institutional processes: (De)institutionalization & institutional change	Institutions <i>as</i> processes: Ongoing accomplishments in perpetual states of emergence and becoming
Change and stability	Stability and change as distinct states; stability requires maintenance work in response to threats or deterioration; change requires disruption and creation	Change inherent to institutional reproduction; Stability as imagined state of affairs
Temporality	Time as a variable/measure of process: Clock time	Time as duration/intrinsic to processes: Process temporality
Temporality and institutional analysis	Temporal dynamics of institutional processes	Temporal patterns of institutions themselves

FIGURE 2: THE ROLE OF TEMPORALITY IN INSTITUTIONAL STABILIZATION

