Memory and Institutional Dynamics in Markets: "The Phantasmal of Memories" in W.G. Sebald's Narrative

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Abstract

This work investigates the role of memory in the processes of *market creation/change*. By drawing on recent developments in the neo-institutionalist theory, understanding how memory contribution to "institutional dynamics in markets" is closely linked to the institutional dimensions of emotion.

The *case study* adopted a *grounded theory* approach to analyse the novels by the writer W.G. Sebald. Among the most exemplary manifestations of "narrative of memory", in terms of research design, Sebald's writings show interesting dimensions of analysis: the dialogue between *organizational institutionalism*, *marketing studies* and *consumer research* is enriched by introducing the relationship between "agency and context" and "practice and materiality".

The "representation of the past" (the memory *à la* Ricoeur) is a phenomenon that emerges at the confluence of two dynamics: (i) emotions are a powerful "collective phenomenon", fueling forms of *Institutional Work* (IW); (ii) and support historical processes, "restructuring" the *Institutional Logics (IL)* which take shape over time. The main theoretical implication is that markets are characterized (also) by their "temporal structures" and from the point of view of institutional dynamics they are "mnemonic fields".

Keywords: *emotion, memory, market dynamics, mnemonic fields, W.G. Sebald*

Introduction and Conceptual Background

In extending the institutional analysis to market-level studies (and in order to place individuals and organizations in markets as *social processes*), Dolbec and Fischer (2015) define the market as "an organizational field encompassing a set of *institutions* and *actors*, governed by *institutional logics*, supported by *institutional work*, and characterized by *institutional boundaries*" (p. 1449). This work considers in particular the relationship between *institutional logics* (ILs) and *institutional work* (IWs) to investigate the role of memory in *market creation/change*.

By drawing on the most recent evolution of the *New-Institutional Theory* (Greenwood *et al.* 2017), the hypothesis of work is that the introduction of the *emotion* into institutional dimensions (Zietsma, Toubiana 2019) allows understanding how memory contributes to "institutional dynamics in markets"

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(Giesler, Fischer 2017). The relationship between emotions, institutions and memory enriches the dialogue between organizational institutionalism (Greenwood *et al.* 2017; Friedland 2018), marketing studies and consumer research (Maclaran *et al.* 2009; Slimane *et al.* 2019) around two rather topical issues in the development of social sciences (Nicolini 2012): the relationship between *agency and context* and between *practice and materiality*.

Starting from a common perspective in the institutional analysis on "how the logics associated with the various institutional orders of society enabled and constrained organizations and individuals" (in Greenwood *et al.* 2017: 509); Roger Friedman suggests a connection between ILs and *practices* (*à la* Schatzki): "[ILs] bind *subjects*, *practices* and *objects* in persistent constellations, as meaningful modalities of [as a grammar of] socio-materiality" (2018a: 1369); and "I conceptualize the goods grounding an IL as *institutional substances*" (2018: 525-526). This passage allows to support the "cultural" nature of institutional logic and the connection between individual and collective level (Thornton *et al.* 2012), as well as to address what Suddaby *et al.* (2014) define as *historical institutionalism*: "the socio-historical process by which habituated actions and meanings become reified as objective social structures" (p. 111). Furthermore, the relationship between *agency* and *practice* reconsiders three fundamental elements for the IW perspective (Lawrence, Suddaby 2006: 219-220): (i) the actors are "culturally competent [and] with strong practical skills and sensibility", can "creatively navigate within their organizational fields"; (ii) IW allows to understand "both the sets of practices in which institutional actors engage that maintaining institutions and the practices that are associated with the creation of new institutions and the disruption of existing ones"; (iii) and "the practices which might lead to institutional innovations are themselves institutionally embedded". The work introduces organisational fields such as "the recurrent reconstruction of social structures and meanings through *mnemonic practices* – that is, practices of remembering, forgetting, and using the past" (Coraiola *et al.* 2018, p. 50).

Evidences from Sebald's Narrative and Methodological Approach

The theme of the "representation of the memory", the emergence of "mnemonic practices" starting from the institutional dimension of emotions, and the question of the treatment of "historical time", are dealt by the works of the writer W.G. Sebald (1944-2001): *Vertigo* (see abbreviations in Appendix: *[VER]*, 1990/1999), *The Emigrants* (*[EMI]*, 1992/1996), *The Rings of Saturn* (*[RoS]*, 1995/1998), *Austerlitz* (*[AUS]*, 2001). For example, in *Vertigo* and *Austerlitz*:

«an unnamed narrator, beset by nervous aliments, journeys across Europe – to Vienna, Venice, Verona, Riva, and finally to his childhood home in a small Bavarian village. He is also journey in the past. Traveling in the footsteps to Stendhal, Casanova, and Kafka, the narrator draws the reader line by line into a dizzying web of history, biography, auto-biography, legends, literature, and – most perilously – memories» *[VER_intro]*.

«[…] is the story of a man's search for the answer to his life's central riddle. A small child when he comes to England on a *Kindertransport* in the summer of 1939, one Jacques Austerlitz is told nothing of his real family by the Welsh Methodist minister and his wife who raise him. When he is a much older man, fleeting memories return to him, and obeying an instinct he only dimly understands, he follows their trail back to the world he left behind a half century before. There, faced with the void at the heart of twentieth-century Europe, he struggles to rescue his heritage from oblivion» *[AUS_intro]*.

Oscillating between "literature and non-fiction" and between fragments of "biography [individual memory], historical memory and literary memory", Sebald deals with many aspects of a real "memory anatomy" (*[EOM_introduction]*): the traumas of the past and the abuses of memory (Todorov: *[LAM]*), the theme of remembrance, archives and witnesses (Agamben: *[RoA]*; Lowenthal: *[PFC]*), the mechanisms of repression and the concept of oblivion (Connerton: *[HMF]*), the social construction of collective memory (Zerubavel: *[TMs]*; Lowenthal: *[PFC]*). The expression "phantasmal memories" in the title of the article refers to that invisible object (the relationship between "history, memory and trauma": see *[HMT]*, *[IAM]*) that unites his stories: the tragedy of the holocaust and "the history of persecution, of vilification of minorities, the attempt, well-night achieved, to eradicate a whole people"; themes that in his perspective can only be narrated "obliquely, tangentially, by reference rather than by direct confrontation" (Sebald in: *[EoM_p. 113]*). In a *grounded theory* perspective (Goulding 2002; Belk, Sobh 2019), Sebald's works problematise: a) the connection between *emotion-institution-memory* in terms of IW forms, through the constructs that Creed *et al.* (2014) call as *shame nexus*; b) the phenomenon of the "representation of the past" (*à la* Ricouer: 2004), in terms of "historicing insitutional logics" (Mutch 2018; Friedland 2018, 2018a). For reasons of space, the next two sections simply show the reflections that derive from the *coding* procedures of the materials without delving into how the conceptual categories emerged through the analysis.

Shame and Social Practices: Emotion and Institutional Work

The central part of the table (Appendix 1) takes up the theoretical proposal of Creed *et al.* (2014), "a constellation of related constructs that they label the *shame nexus*" to show how "the experience of 'felt shame' can signal a threat to *valued social bonds*". Lok *et al.* (in Greenwood *et al.* 2017) share the institutional importance of emotion as a social phenomenon (see also: Ahmed 2014; Jacob-Sadeh, Zilber 2019; Moisander *et al.* 2016; Voronov, Vince 2012; Zietsma, Toubiana 2019): «this power of institutions to generate self-imposed limitations on behavior, through the emotions they induce in people as well as the emotional displays they require from people, often involve shame» (602).

Sebald's writings, defined by literary criticism (Appendix: *[US]*, *[HMT]*, *[RS]*, *[IAM]*, *[HP]*) as exemplary manifestations of "narrative of memory", bring out the sense of shame as a powerful collective phenomenon "both shaped by and

constitutive of systems of dominations" and thus "as a source of institutional reproduction and change" (Creed *et al.* 2014: 283). By contrast, Sebald's narrative allows to reflect on the particular ontological dimension of the phenomenon: the concept of "valued social bond" is central to the theoretical proposal of Creed *et al.* (2014); but, in the institutionalist tradition, «the value of social bonds is their ability to satisfy individuals' 'need for recognition', not their ability to produce, realize, incarnate or enact a particular value» (Friedland 2018: 523). In other words, the forms of IW identified by Creed *et al.* (2014) describe "emotions that have become so conventional that we take them for granted". "Shame and recognition" suggest a further level of sociability when "it is not just the feeling of the social that matters, but the social construction of feelings and the ways in which particular social forms are constituted through those feelings and vice versa" (Friedland 2019: 524). Friedland (2018) proposes a more coherent theoretical construction around emotion and IW (Ahmed 2014; Voronov, Vince 2012; Moisander *et al.* 2016): the ontology of a *practice-based* approach (Nicolini 2012) envisages the non-separation of «cognition and emotion, […] as Creed *et al.* do, in which cognitions 'set the stage for social control' through prescription, while emotion provides the 'impetus for compliance'» (Friedland 2018: 523).

Constructing Institutional Logics: Memory, History, Forgetting

The lower part of the table (*[HTF]*: Appendix 2a) places Sebald's writings and Ricoeur's "representation of the past" side by side as a possible mapping of the complexity of his narrative. Ricoeur's investigation addresses (1) a *phenomenology of memory*; (2) an *epistemology of historical knowledge*; (3) a *hermeneutics of the historical condition*. The first part takes up the questions "what is the memory about?" and "whose memory is it?", the uses and abuses of memory and personal and collective memory. In an epistemology of historical knowledge, memory is part of historical knowledge through its tools: archived memory; historical explanation/understanding; the historical representation. Finally, a hermeneutics of the historical condition investigates its limits, considers the production of historical knowledge as a process which, between emotion and reason, opens up to public reflection on topics such as oblivion and forgiveness (Appendix 2a).

The *practice-based* approach connects the institutional dimension of emotions (*IW* forms) and the mechanisms for understanding the co-constitutive dimension of emotion and institution (such as *IL*): «if particular affects, or affective regimes, are afforded by particular values or practices, an *IL* obtains where we are affected by the affects it affords, and where those affects are part of the effects effected through its practices» (Friedland 2018: 524). To place emotions in *ILs*, Friedland refers to Schatzki's theoretical construction (Nicolini 2012: 164-165): «practices are sets of doings and sayings, […] open-ended spatial-temporal manifolds of actions linked each other through four main mechanisms, (a) "*practical understanding*; (b) *rules*, (c) *teleo-affective structure*, (d) and *general understanding*». Emotions are constituent components of ILs: «with its co-

implication of the teleological and the affective an institutional substance has a kinship with Schatzki's "teleo-attective structure" – combinations of ends and "allied" emotions, which "link" the "organized nexus" of doings and sayings, the primary elements of practice in his theory […]». And in particular: «Emotions here are sources of "enjoy[ment]", or pain, one can or ought to experience while engaged in the practice. These emotions are "embodied understandings" of practice. Ends are that for the "sake of which" persons act; activities are organized hierarchically, "top[ping] off" in activities not pursuant to further activities: these are the ends of practice» (Friedland 2018: 526). Based on the connection between "practice and ends/emotions" and Mutch's (2018) intuition on the need for "historicising institutional logics", it becomes possible to deal with the thesis of this work: the organizational fields are «largely mnemonic communities – in other words, historically contingent structures that reflect the collective memory of their participants» (Coraiola *et al.* 2018: p. 50).

Conclusion: Marketing, Consumer Behavior and Memory

The comparison between *marketing theory* and *organizational institutionalism* is rather fruitful in research programmes that critically combine epistemology, theory, methods and the empirical contexts investigated. The selected articles (Appendix 2b), integrated together, provide an overview of the most promising lines of research in the dialogue between *materiality* and *practice-based* perspectives: Brunk *et al.* (2018) develop "a theoretical framework of *hegemonic memory making*" to analyse the relationships between consumers' memory, memory making, and market systems; Molander e Hartmann (2019) analyse "how practices organize emotions and vice versa" recalling Schatzki's theory, in particular the "teleo-affective structure", to point out "how *practices and emotions are co-constitutive*"; Jenkins and Molesworth (2018) deals with the concept of *imagination*, connected to emotion and time dimension, "noting the importance of the imagination in terms of implications for macro-level market structures and individual consumption practice"; according to Türe and Ger (2016) memory is connected to *materiality* and "how heirlooms can also become objects of evolving personal identities and change". Finally, digital memory introduces the technological dimension, explored by Belk (2013) in terms of *distributed memory*, in the relationship *emotion-memory* and *practice-materiality*.

Concluding remarks. The proposed articles cover different aspects of a general framework on *emotion-institution-memory*: disclosing how useful a research programme can be on the phenomenon of the representation of the past in the institutional dynamics of markets considered as *mnemonic fields*; and defining a family of four research agendas focused on (i) "archaeology of things", (ii) "technology and new ontologies", (iii) "historical institutionalism" and (iv) "consuming history" (Appendix 2b).

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APPENDIX - "Phantasmal Memories" and W.G. Sebald's narrative

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APPENDIX - 1) The Shame Nexus: Emotion and Institutional Work (*) (from Creed, Hudson, Okhuysen, Smith-Crowe 2014)

Construct	Felt shame	Systemic shame	Episodic shame
Definition	«**Felt shame** is a discrete emotion experienced by a person based on negative self-evaluations stemming from the perceived or actual depreciation by others owing to a failure to meet standards behavior»	«**Systemic shame** is a disciplinary form of power; it is a relational, distributed, and often invisible form of power operating in social groups and communities. It works to make shared rules of what constitutes shameful behavior seem objectively correct or natural. Systemic shame's disciplinary power hinges on its role in constituting and enlisting persons' sense of shame»	«**Episodic shame** is a form of agent or juridical power with the potential to suppress transgressive behavior and restore normative conformity. For episodic shaming to be possible as an exercise of power, both systemic shame and persons' sense of shame must be in place. Shamers deploy episodic shaming through purposeful shaming attempts»
Constructs	A person's **sense of shame** encompasses: a) «**Capacity of shame** is a person's innate ability to experience felt shame b) **Knowledge of the conditions for shame** is a person's understanding, acquired through socialization and personal experience, of what enactments constitute shameful behavior according to the standards of a valued community; such enactments can elicit felt shame c) **Intersubjective surveillance** is a person's unconscious sociometer, a persistent intersubjective awareness as the person assesses others' possible depreciation of the self. Intersubjective surveillance involves taking the perspective of others on an ongoing basis d) **Self-regulation** is a person's keen policing and channeling of his or her behavior based on vigilant, ongoing intersubjective surveillance. Self-regulation reflects a person's continuous desire to avoid felt shame»		a) «**Shamers** are interested members of a community who act as institutional guardians and have cognitive, emotional, and/or moral commitments to existing institutional arrangements, including definitions of acceptable behavior and established patterns of social relations. Shamers actively police the boundaries of acceptable behavior using episodic shaming to alert transgressors that social bonds linking the transgressors to the community are at risk b) **Shaming attempts** are enactments of episodic shaming, deployed by shamers as they seek to regulate the behavior of another community member or members who have transgressed normative prescriptions. Shaming attempts seek to induce felt shame and carry implicit or explicit threats of ostracization, or even the suffering of social bonds and loss of community membership»

APPENDIX - 2a) Emotion and Institutional Logics (*): Memory, History, Forgetting (from Ricœur 2004)

Dimensions	A. Memory (phenomenology of memory)	B. History (epistemology of the historical sciences)	C. Forgetting (hermeneutics of the historical condition)

Constructs	1) **Memory and Recollection**
	
	2) The **Exercise of Memory**
	  a) the abuse of artificial memory
	  b) the abuse of natural memory (blocked memory; manipulated memory; abusively controlled memory)
	
	3) **Personal** Memory, **Collective** Memory
	
	(*) see also: Mutch 2018, 2019; Jakob-Sadeh, Zilber 2019; Friedland 2018, 2018a; Voronov, Vince 2012; Thornton *et al.* 2012; Moisander *et al.* 2016; Zietsma, Toubiana 2019. *Historical institutionalism:* Suddaby et al. 2014; Coraiola *et al.* 2018. *Institutional dynamics in markets:* Humphreys 2010; Scaraboto, Fischer 2013; Dolbec, Fischer 2015; Türe, Ger 2016; Brunk *et al.* 2018; Jenkins, Molesworth 2018; Molander, Hartmann 2018; Slimane *et al.* 2019
		1) **Archived Memory**:
		  a) inhabited space
		  b) historical time
		  c) testimony
		  d) the archive
		  e) documentary proof
		
		2) **Explanation/Understanding**:
		  a) the scale of efficacy or of coerciveness
		  b) the scale of degrees of legitimation
		  c) the scale of non quantitative aspects of social times
		
		3) The **Historian's Representation**:
		  a) representation and narration
		  b) representation and rhetoric
		  c) the historian's representation and the prestige of the image
		  d) "standing for"
			1) The **Critical Philosophy of History**:
			  a) "historical itself"
			  b) "our" moderidity
			  c) the historian and the judge
			  d) interpretation in history
			
			2) **History and Time**:
			  a) temporality
			  b) historicity
			  c) within-timeness, being-"in"-time
			  d) the uncanniness of history
			
			3) **Forgetting**:
			  a) forgetting and the effacing of traces
			  b) forgetting and the persistence of traces
			  c) the forgetting of recollection (blocked memory, manipulated memory, amnesty)

APPENDIX - 2b) Market System Dynamics & Emotion-Memory-History (from Ricœur 2004): Four Research Agendas

			1. Institutional Work	2. Institutional Logics	
A. Memory	a)	recollection	Belk 2013	Research Agenda #04 - "Consuming History"	
	b)	exercise			
	c)	personal/collective	Brunk et al. 2018		
B. History	a)	archived	Jenkins, Molesworth 2018		
	b)	explanation/understanding	Molander, Hartmann 2019	Research Agenda #03 - "Historical Institutionalism"	
	c)	representation	Türe, Ger 2016		
C. Forgetting	a)	interpetation			
	b)	time		Research Agenda #01 - Practice & Materiality: "Archaeology of Things"	
	c)	traces	Belk 2013		

Research Agenda #02 - Technology & Memory: "New Ontologies"