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Emerging Institutions: Pyramids or Anthills?

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Organizing in Action Nets

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Abstract

In the present text, an institution is understood to be an (observable) pattern of collective action, justified by a corresponding social norm. By this definition, an institution emerges slowly, although it may be helped or hindered by various specific acts. From this perspective, an institutional entrepreneur is an oxymoron, at least in principle. In practice, however, there are and always have been people trying to create institutions. This paper describes the emergence of London School of Economics and Political Science as an institution and analyzes its founders and its supporters during crises as institutional entrepreneurs. A tentative theory of the phenomenon of institutional entrepreneurship inspired by an actor-network theory is then tested on two other cases described in brief.

Keywords: higher education, institutions, entrepreneurs, actor-network theory

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> ... we do not like the complexity of real history.
> The authors of ideas prefer to think
> that they are directly responsible for realities
> that correspond to their speeches or writings,
> and the rest love simple causal explanations,
> not to say conspiracy theories
> (Dahrendorf, 1995: 40)

Institutional entrepreneur: an oxymoron?

In view of the extremely rich flora of definitions that the word *institution* seems to attract, it is necessary to define it at the outset. One type of definition emphasizes the rules of conduct. Yet Meyer *et al.* (1987: 13), who described "institutions as cultural rules giving collective meaning and value to particular entities and activities", failed to define "cultural rules". Picking up the same thread, March and Olsen were more concrete when they said: "Political institutions are collections of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate actions in terms of relations between roles and situations" (1989:160). One possibility, often favored in political sciences and economics, is to limit such rules and routines to explicitly codified laws, statutes, and regulations; but March and Olsen's definition was not that narrow.

Another definition calls an institution "a legitimized social grouping" (Mary Douglas, 1986: 46), a notion that seems to be shared by MacIntyre (1981). An organization is also seen as a group of people, and therefore an institution of a certain type. March and Olsen (1989) seem to lapse into the same definition two sentences after presenting their own, quoted above, by saying: "When individuals *enter* an institution, they try to discover, and are taught, the rules" (1989: 160, my italics). The lapse is easy to understand, as it corresponds to the popular use of the term, which usually means "a public administration organization".

In the present text, an institution is understood to be an (observable) pattern of collective action, justified by a corresponding social norm (Czarniawska, 1997). This definition is based primarily on Berger and Luckmann's reasoning: "institutions posit that actions of type X will be performed by actors of type X" (1966: 72). A constructive reciprocity is assumed; i.e. the performance of an X type of action leads to the perception that a given actor belongs to (or aspires to) type X, and vice versa. In narrative analysis, in which institution equals genre (Bruss, 1976), the intelligibility of action X is achieved by referring it to a genre, where action X and actor X belong to the same type of narrative. Thus a manager cleaning the floors and a woman making strategic decisions in a corporation beg for explanation, as such happenings violate the institutionalized order of things.

Within such an order, the actors are often not people but "legitimized

social groupings": work units, profit centers, departments, corporations, public administration organizations, associations of organizations, and all those whose interactions "constitute a recognized area of institutional life" – an organization field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 148). Actors leave or are pushed out of a field and new actors enter it (consider the powerful entry of environmentalists into political, industrial, and academic fields). Actions, in spite of the stability and repetitiveness that earn them the name of institutions, change in both form and meaning; the narrative changes in every narration. Finally, the process itself is recursive, as Meyer *et al.* (1987) point out: whereas actors perform actions, actions create actors (or rather, their identities) within the context of a narrative, which is created, in turn, by actions and actors.

Within this definition, an institution emerges slowly, although it may be helped or hindered by various specific acts. In narrative terms, one story does not a genre make. In terms of actor-network theory, which is itself of narrative origins (Czarniawska and Hernes, 2005), an institution can be seen as a macro-actor of long standing that is strengthened not only by the norm or norms, but also by artifacts (Joerges and Czarniawska, 1998). Furthermore, an institution depends for its survival on its ability to fit into the dominant institutional order (Warren *et al.*, 1974; Meyer *et al.*, 1987).

From this perspective, an institutional entrepreneur is an oxymoron, at least in principle. A person or a group can *institute*, but not *institutionalize*: the latter verb can only be used as past participle. In practice, however, there are, and always have been people or groups that try to create institutions. They could be divided into three categories:

1. those that, in their endeavors, ignore the institutional order dominant in their time and place: Marie Curie Sklodowska, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, and the founders of the Northern German University, described below;
2. those that institute a practice and count upon it being institutionalized: Tavistock Institute and the "company doctors" in UK; Olof Palme and the "you-reform" in Sweden; and the creators of the Chicago school of sociology;
3. those that construct a formal organization attempting (hoping) to turn it into an institution in its own right: TVA, Microsoft, LSE.

In this paper I first focus on the emergence of London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) as an institution and treat as institutional entrepreneurs both its founders and its supporters during crises, within a framework inspired by a combination of actor-network theory (Callon and Latour, 1981; Callon, 1986; Latour, 1986; Czarniawska and Hernes, 2005) and the garbage can model (Cohen *et al.*, 1972; March and Olsen, 1976). The tentative theory that emerges from the analysis posits that a popular theory of institutional entrepreneurship mistakes formal organization builders for institutional entrepreneurs, as the deeds

of the former better fit an established narration pattern. In contrast, institutional entrepreneurs are not necessarily hero-like figures, and may contribute to the emergence of new institutions with loose connections to formal organizations. This theory is tested on two more cases described in brief: an attempt to found a private university in Germany and the formation of the Chicago school of sociology.

An idea whose time has come

The circumstances in which an idea arose in the local time/space or, even more important, how and when it decisively came to the attention of a given group of organizational actors, are often unknown (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996). It was frequently a meaningless event at the time. But when the translation of ideas into actions is well advanced, the actors involved feel a need to mythologize by dramatizing origins. Such is the case of LSE.

Breakfast at the Webbs...

All formal and informal accounts[1] point at the breakfast party on 4 August 1894, with four members of Fabian Society present: the wards, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, and the guests, George Wallas and George Bernard Shaw. Of course, the idea was not born then and there, and Sidney Webb himself saw "the breakfast" as an invention of Wallas' over-lively imagination. The origins of the idea extend back to the Fabian Society, an intellectual movement concerned with research, discussion, and publication of socialist ideas, founded in 1884 and to many other factors, such as Sidney Webb's close connection with the City of London and with London County Council (LCC).

The object around which an alliance needed to be forged was a bequest of £20 000[2] to the Fabian Society by Henry Hunt Hutchinson; the breakfast on 4 August 1894 brought the news of Hutchinson's suicide and of his bequest, which can best be seen as a materialization of the spirit of the times. As Rorty puts it, "poetic, artistic, philosophical, scientific or political progress results from the accidental coincidence of a private obsession with a public need" (1989: 37).

At that breakfast party, the existing alliances were geared in a new direction: toward laying the groundwork for LSE. The alliances involved micro-actors of various sizes: the Fabian Society was the biggest, but there were many others. As Sidney Webb wrote to another Fabian, Edward Pease, in 1886: "Nothing is

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[1] In what follows, I use Ralf Dahrendorf's history of LSE published at its 100th anniversary (Dahrendorf, 1995) and LSE's own homepage, http://www.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory, which is consistent with Dahrendorf's version.

[2] Equivalent to approximately one million pounds in 1994, says Dahrendorf (p. 3).

done in England without the consent of a small intellectual yet political class in London, not 2000 in number. We alone could get at that class." (http://www.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory).

From the outset, there was disagreement over the LSE's political stance; for Shaw it ought to be manifestly collectivist, while for Sidney Webb it was to be neutral and unbiased. Webb's line won this argument.

… but it was the Zeitgeist that set the table

How did the Webbs and their allies get 2000 people in London – or at least some of them – to listen? There is a limit to the number of issues people notice and react to, regardless of their acuity. Downs (1972) showed how public reaction to problems is subject to "issue-attention cycles", in which problems suddenly leap into prominence, remain the center of attention for a short time, and gradually fade away. A problem must be dramatic and exciting in order to maintain public interest – to survive in translocal time/space. As long as a problem is the focus of attention, all the ideas that can be related to it have a greater chance of being realized. All existing actions that can be represented as being coupled with it have a greater chance of being legitimized.

In 1890s, the public discourse in Britain was tinged with a concern that Britain's international position in business and industry was at risk because of inadequate teaching and research. In August 1894, the British Association for the Advancement of Science spoke for the need to advance the systematic study of economics. Thus the bequest and the idea of LSE: the first university organization dedicated to the social sciences. Its original goal was to engage political science, history, and economics in the study of humanity's social relationships. Sociology, geography, statistics, and anthropology followed suit, with psychology as the latest addition. The goals and the means of LSE were to differ from those of a traditional university: it was to be a neutral and unbiased center of research, but with a pragmatic and practical bent. The advanced studies of social relationships were to be used in education for careers in administration and business.

Was LSE an invention or an imitation? Both. The social sciences already occupied an influential position in France, and the French had their *écoles* educating the ruling elites. In fact, *École Libre des Sciences Politiques* in Paris was mentioned by Wallas as a model, and the Faculty of Political Science at Columbia University by Webb, who was also impressed by the economics courses at MIT.

Dahrendorf says that the social sciences "… were not exactly invented at LSE but the School brought them together like no other university in Europe, led them to full bloom in all their variety, and then reflected the aches and pains of their maturity, in which professionalization often went hand in hand with an uncertain sense of direction" (p. viii). Curiously, LSE was a British invention, but it was later granted money by the Rockefeller Memorial because

it was "outside British tradition" (p. 167). The character of this invention was related to the fact that the Fabians' non-revolutionary – indeed, incrementalist – version of socialism was in fashion. The Webbs and GBS were undoubtedly "fashion leaders". And although individuals cannot create fashion, they can try to influence it, often successfully (Czarniawska, 2005). What is more, they can use fashion for the purpose of creating new institutions. Fashion operates at institutional fringes. On the one hand, its variety is limited by the "iron cage" of existing institutions, which fashion actually reproduces; on the other hand, fashion is engaged in a constant subversion of the existing institutional order, gnawing ant-like at its bars.

Similarly, although fashion seems to sabotage and threaten established institutions, it is also an institutional playfield: new fashions can be tried and disposed of or it can become institutionalized, thus revitalizing the existing institutional order. Webb saw LSE as an experiment: "'It would make a great public sensation, and would, I am sure, "catch on". If not, it need not be continued'" (as quoted by Dahrendorf, p. 8). Although it has been tried many times, it is hard to find a fashion that brought about a revolution; it would be easier to demonstrate that totalitarian systems suffocate fashion.

The final say in the selection of ideas, and of fashions, is often given to the *Zeitgeist* who, like all holy spirits, has the double virtue of being invisible and all-encompassing, thus stopping the spiral of still further questions. This is not pure metaphysics: Forty (1986) argued that, in a sense, an idea cannot catch on unless it has already existed for some time in the minds of many people, as a part of what is called the spirit of the time. How does the spirit of the time change? Gradually and imperceptibly.

> Europe did not *decide* to accept the idiom of Romantic poetry, or of socialist politics, or of Galilean mechanics. That sort of shift was no more an act of will than it was a result of argument. Rather, Europe gradually lost the habit of using certain words and gradually acquired the habit of using others (Rorty, 1989: 6).

Thus, although the London School of Economics and Political Science was instituted by a decision, or rather by a series of decisions, it was made possible through an initiative of institutional entrepreneurs who correctly deciphered the shift in the idiom of the day.

One more element should be added to the picture: the turn-of-the-century atmosphere. The emerging institutions become connected to existing institutions that serve as sources of ideas, stimuli for action, or both. Anniversaries, birthdays, centennials, and millennia are institutionalized celebrations that permit certain unusual actions and invite certain unusual ways of sensemaking. Turn-of-the-century is a huge event in Europe, one that provokes enormous amounts of sense-making, which can lead to change (Joerges, 1990). The time perspectives of people and organizations are turned around; courses of action are taken that

break against formed expectations about what is normal, lawful, and repetitive. The unique, the unlikely, the unprecedented, even the impossible happens – or is anticipated and begins to guide action. Epochs are closed (and thereby defined), other futures are opened (and thereby tentatively defined) by breaking cleanly with the past. Such a context is favorable for turning latent ideas into projects. It entails a vast redefinition of situations, an extraordinary mobilization of resources, and the unfreezing of institutionalized resource allocations. Thus 1895 was a good year to start a new School.

An idea is enacted

An idea is objectified and attracts further allies

Sidney Webb, with Beatrice's support (given, it seems, more out of marital loyalty than conviction), began slowly but surely to stabilize the idea of LSE. Money first: on 8 February 1895, the Hutchinson Trustees agreed to spend most of the money on the School of Economics and Political Science, detailing its structure and the subjects of its lectures. As Webb had never intended to become a director, first Wallas, who refused, and then Hewins, who accepted, were offered the job. As Dahrendorf notes, Webb was 35 at the time, and Hewins was 29 – which may explain the pace of what happened next:

> Within six months [Hewins] found rooms for the School, designed the syllabus of its courses, gathered support for the new venture *urbi et orbi*, and attracted over two hundred students so that the first academic year of the London School of Economics and Political Science could start on 10 October 1895 (p. 13)

Apart from the age of these entrepreneurs, and the fact that the 19th century was the age of founders (*Gründerzeit)*, it was the lack of bureaucracy, says Dahrendorf, that allowed these men to put the school into operation. As to Beatrice Potter Webb, although Dahrendorf gives her little credit, he admits that if "the early history of LSE (...) is as much recorded history as it is history in the making, this is owed to Beatrice Webb's gifts as an observer and a diarist. And what a talent it is to write history as one makes it, and at times make it by writing about it!" (p. 27).

Sidney Webb continued to attract sponsors: private donations and support from LCC's Technical Education Board. Webb had, in fact, reorganized the board for that very purpose and had managed to have himself elected as Chairman. Hewins wrote letters to economists and social scientists in Europe and enlisted either their moral support or their direct collaboration. He coaxed the Society of Arts and the Chamber of Commerce into helping with the provision of rooms for the School. He obtained these donations by promising a neutral perspective

for the School, a pledge that first enraged Shaw and later caused him to lose interest. Webb's attempt to engage him in the LSE cause had not succeeded, and, having failed to prevent Hutchinson's money from being spent on LSE, GBS withdrew from the emerging network. This was the first but by no means the last time a potentially central actor was reduced to a role of an actant (an object of the network's action).

Hewins also wrote (by hand) the academic program of the School. By July 1895, it had become a printed prospectus of 11 pages. All lectures and most of the classes were to be given between 18.00 and 21.00; men and women, British subjects and foreigners were equally welcome. There were tuition fees, but also scholarships; a publication series to secure the visibility of research results was arranged.

Hewins gave also what Dahrendorf calls "a string of upbeat newspaper interviews", in which the Webbs' names were seldom mentioned. One of the newspapers called the yet non-existent LSE "one of the great English institutions of the new age" (p. 23).

Entrepreneurs, a name, rented rooms, a prospectus, money, staff, students, media testimony: everything was ready. It should be no surprise that "... words, printed and unprinted, were from the beginning the great weapons which LSE people used, weapons of attack and also weapons of self-defense, not least from the often unbearable tension of values and social science" (Dahrendorf, p. viii).

An idea is put into practice: "A great romance" begins

What did they do? They held lectures, a departure from the tutoring tradition of Oxford and Cambridge, demonstrating from the beginning the School's in-built paradox: "Hewins in the front parlour lecturing to a dozen or so mostly *men* on economics; Wallas in the back parlour lecturing to twenty or thirty mostly *women* on Poor Law" (as quoted by Dahrendorf, p. 61). It seems that Dahrendorf does not approve of paradoxes and considers the tensions that arose to be counter-productive (in his reading, LSE succeeded *in spite* of them, although they made the place attractive). Other studies suggest that that may be the very reason it succeeded (Czarniawska, 1997). A school of commerce, and a high brow university; a school for everyone, yet educating "the captains of industry and commerce"; the Chairman to the left, the Director to the right; the Director and the Secretary aloof and disciplinarian, the Head Porter creating a domestic atmosphere; an "imperialist" staff and "social reformist" students.

What happened when it came to open conflict? In the times of the Boer War, the School divided into four factions (four being perhaps better for survival than two); and when the School was offered a Gladstone memorial endowment by the Liberal Party, its member and the main "imperialist", Hewins, said that it could be accepted only on the condition that everyone would be eligible, for "the School, like the rain, must fall equally on the just and the unjust" (as quoted by

Dahrendorf, p. 68). The money went to Oxford.

Apart from formal lectures, the staff and the frequent guests conversed at the Webbs' "At Homes". Staff and students gossiped over afternoon tea arranged by the Secretary, Miss Mactaggart, and, beginning in 1897, the students debated – and danced – at the Student Union meetings. The "romance" of the title is not merely a metaphor: the School, says Dahrendorf, constituted practically a "universe of life": with many women and many foreigners, the world was present in its diversity. Unsurprisingly, there were many marriages between alumni and between staff members, and whole families frequented the School for generations.

Dahrendorf notices all this, but his explanation of the School's success gives primary credit to the entrepreneurs:

> There are several reasons why the venture of building up a new institution (...) succeeded. It benefitted, in the apt phrase used in later Calendars (...) from "the conjunction of need with an opportunity". Circumstances were favourable; a significant demand for social science education could be tapped; thanks to Henry Hunt Hutchinson and Charlotte Payne-Townshend and others the wherewithal was found; influential persons like R.B. Haldane were prepared to lend their support. But when all is said and done, no deconstruction of the history of LSE can detract from the fact that its foundation was the work of two unusual men, Sidney Webb and W.A.S. Hewins[3] (pp. 64-65)

Why should the entrepreneurs be considered so much more important than any other actant? Elsewhere Dahrendorf says that LSE was not "merely the creature of a passing *Zeitgeist*" (p. 47)[4]. He was probably referring to similar attempts that had failed – a London School of Geography and a London School of Ethics and Social Philosophy – but it could just as well be that the window of opportunity had already closed (Kingston, 1984). Not to detract from Webb and Hewins, I believe that the School could have been built by two other people, and it certainly has survived both of them, or perhaps survived because it was able to rid itself of both of them. The School needed stabilization, not only in its early years, but especially then.

LSE becomes a(n) (arti)fact

With the exception of clandestine schools, a school is not a school without a building. Webb and Hewins understood it well, and in February 1896 a large house was rented at 10 Adelphi Terrace. Additional weight was to be added by

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[3] Dahrendorf claims that Webb was a pedantic visionary and that Hewins was an enthusiastic administrator. Indeed, a curious combination, and perhaps a winning one.

[4] At another point (p. 129) he says that "[t]he spirit of the times is more than just the *Zeitgeist*", a peculiar statement for a native German speaker. It seems that Dahrendorf has little respect for *Zeitgeist*.

a Library, a separate but connected building. More funds were obtained from Hutchison's Trust; from Shaw's fiancée, Charlotte Payne-Townshend, who also rented the upper, unnecessary floors of the building; and from other donors. The British Library of Political Science opened on 9 November 1896.[5]

As a stabilizing artifact, a building of one's own is much better than a rented building. Webb first signed a permanent lease on 1300 m^2 in Clare Market from London County Council, which, as Dahrendorf notes, he was renting as the Chairman of LSE from himself as the Chairman of the Technical Education Board at LCC. He next approached a well known benefactor, John Passmore Edwards, for funds. Dahrendorf says that the correspondence between them constitutes painful reading, but "quite typical of the relationship between a benefactor and an academic beggar for institutional money" (p. 54).[6] The foundation stone for Passmore Edwards Hall was laid on 2 July 1900, and in May 1902 the School was moved to its new location. In the meantime the money proved, inevitably, to be short, and Lord Rothschild, among others, helped out. Rothschild then became President of the School.

The School also became a legal body, in a form that seems somewhat exotic to a non-British observer. LSE became a college of the new University of London and a Faculty of Economics and Political Science (including Commerce and Industry) was created, which meant that LSE lecturers became recognized university teachers. LSE was incorporated under the Companies Act as a company limited by guarantee, and registered on 13 June 1901 as the "Incorporated London School of Economics". Because the Board of Trade agreed that the School did not have to include "Limited" in its name, on 2 August 1957 "Incorporated" was dropped. Another important artifact in this context was the text defining the goal of the Corporation: "to provide *for all classes and denominations without any distinction whatsoever*, opportunities and encouragement for pursuing a regular and liberal course of education of the highest grade and quality in the various branches of knowledge dealt with by the institution" (as quoted by Dahrendorf, p. 58). A new institution became solidified by connections created to two other, older institutions: the university and the corporation.

Four years after its opening, the School had 1400 registered students from 16 countries, although it could not confer degrees until a year later. Most of the original teachers remained and new ones joined. The School was a fact.

Actions into routines

As Martha Feldman and Brian Pentland (2005) point out, routines are important but underestimated stabilizers on par with artifacts. What needed to be routinized

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[5] It became the British Library of Political Science and Economics in 1925.

[6] Dahrendorf uses both the noun "institution" and the adjective "institutional" in great many meanings, often on the same page.

in LSE were administrative, pedagogical, and scientific activities. The person to begin this task was the next director, the geographer, Halford Mackinder (Hewins left in 1903 for his next project). A three-year undergraduate degree-day course was organized, special advisory committees were established to guarantee the continuity of research, a systematic program of visiting evening lecturers was put into operation, and the Library was turned into a research site with special emphasis on sociology and history. Postgraduate research was increasing in visibility – about 40 percent of all British postgraduates were at LSE. The Director had begun to write regular annual reports (Hewins wrote only one) – and saw to it that he had somebody to report to. Various governmental and administrative bodies were established, apart from the Court of Governors (Professorial Committee, Council of Management, Finance and General Purpose Committee). The Secretary, Miss Mactaggart, received clear responsibilities.

Beginning with Mackinder, large amounts of text were produced by the directors and many others, which seems to support the Phillips *et al.* (2004) thesis about the importance of texts in the process of institutionalization. At the same time, the history of LSE also exemplifies to perfection why texts are not enough, as the case of Dahrendorf's 1974 failed project best shows.

During Mackinder's time, the railways and then the army sent students in great numbers to LSE, and their fees, together with grants from public bodies and more fluctuating donations, constituted important financial input. Mackinder was quick, therefore, in responding to a cue from the Treasury Committee, which seemed to strongly appreciate the new School, and obtained a significant state grant. He was also keen on cultivating connections with the University and successful in attracting grants to support the development of the newfangled discipline of sociology.

Mackinder left the directorship in 1908, and the School was "better organized and academically more solid than he had found it" (p. 108). Yet Mackinder is not seen as an institutional entrepreneur. Without him, or without someone who fulfilled the stabilizing functions, the School might have failed, as others did. A question arises: Do we perceive people as institutional entrepreneurs because they have established institutions or because they reval traits that we associate, in the mythology of entrepreneurship, as necessary for such an endeavor – vision and enthusiasm, as opposed to mere administrative skills? Can it be that, if Sidney Webb had not existed, he would have had to be invented, and that the romance of entrepreneurship dictates the plot of its documentation? That a spokesperson is mistaken for the force behind a macro actor?

An idea is maintained and institutionalized

It is my thesis that institutional entrepreneurs, although playing a role in the emergence of institutions, do not shape them according to their will. In support of this position I briefly review the times of crisis that threatened the School and the ways in which it survived them, together with significant positive turns in the School's fate. The first crisis had, in fact, to do with its founder.

Webb resigns

On 17 September 1910, with Beatrice present, Sidney Webb gave a flamboyant talk to the railway unionists. This talk was used by the Webbs' political opponents on the issue of Poor Law to attack him as an inappropriate Chairman for LSE, which, after all, educated railway executives. Although all three Directors defended him, he used the world tour that he and Beatrice had planned as a pretext to resign. As Dahrendorf points out, the Webbs' actions in the matter of Poor Law were unrealistic and harmful to most of their causes; thus one can deduce that even institutional entrepreneurs *par excellence* do not succeed with all the institutions they attempt to erect. One could claim, in fact, that the law the Webbs were trying to promote was more important than the School and that Sidney Webb cared about it more than he cared about LSE. The majority version of the law against which the Webbs rebelled was not implemented until some twenty years later.

Webb served LSE once more, when the Director, William Pember Reeves, suffered a breakdown after the death of his son in 1917. Webb undertook the unpleasant duty of informing Reeves that his services were no longer required, assumed responsibility for the School between May and October 1919, and helped find Sir William Beveridge and convince him to become the next director.

In 1932, the Webbs traveled to the Soviet Union and described Stalin's purges in a way that Dahrendorf, in general a supporter of the Webbs, calls "sickening" (p. 268). Ernest Gellner (1995) thought Dahrendorf's phrasing contained "too much sorrow and too little anger" (p. 3), and suggested, for the good of the School, that the Founders were best forgotten.

The second foundation

Beatrice Webb coined the expression "the second foundation" in describing the Beveridge era (1919-1937), during which several things happened and several other things were produced. Beveridge introduced a commerce degree, which, he figured, had to be right, as it was criticized by both theoreticians and practitioners. A new building complex (requiring new money) has been constructed (no foundation without a foundation stone – laid in 1920 by King George V). "Staff now had rooms, there were even administrative quarters, students had classrooms as well as space for recreation, there were lecture theatres, there was a real library"

(p. 143). New faculty members were recruited and received full-time university posts, and the majority of students enrolled full time, a transformation that Beveridge called a "decasualization".

Dahrendorf expresses the opinion of other biographers that all this might have happened without Beveridge, but that it would probably have proceeded more slowly and without a "Beveridge impress". The latter, says Dahrendorf, was his success with students, whom he saw as citizens of a modern state, to use his own metaphor (the faculty members, in contrast, weren't fond of him).

In order to solidify, to legitimize the idea-become-action, signals had to be sent to the wider community: dramatizing, justifying, marketing, selling, propagating. Although Webb understood all this, his choice of media was traditional: letters, articles, lectures. But an idea, locally translated into action, must be reified, for purposes of non-local communication, into a quasi-object that can travel and is recognizable as a translocal frame of reference. During Beveridge's time, the logo of a beaver and the motto, *rerum cognoscere causas* (of which Dahrendorf strongly approves) were promptly produced. The School's own journal, *Economica*, began publication in 1921.

It appears that Beveridge was a workaholic and an autocrat, two characteristics that supposedly hold the key to the governance structure he formed and survived for many decades. This structure's main trait was the delegation of governing duties from the Court of Governors (whose numbers were simply too high) to the Director, justifying it with two arguments: that the collegiate system at Oxford and Cambridge was not innovative and that academics should teach and do research and not be bothered with administration.

Beveridge was not alone: as Webb had his Hewins, so Beveridge had his Jessy Mair – first as his Secretary and later as his wife. She replaced Miss Mactaggart, who had actually run the School during the last years of Reeves' directorship, was promoted to the position of Dean, and then retired. Jessy Mair assumed both positions simultaneously.

Perhaps Beveridge's greatest scoop was the grant he obtained from the Rockefeller Memorial and Foundation, which, in the years 1923-1937, constituted one-quarter of LSE's income. Interestingly enough, Rockefeller came looking for LSE and not the other way around, but once they had found each other, Beveridge took great care to preserve the connection. He established a Committee that produced serious and regular reports, sailed across the Atlantic when necessary, and, with the help of the Secretary, maintained frequent informal contacts with the foundations.

During the period 1928-1932, many of the original professors retired and were replaced by people trained at the School – a generational exchange that appears to have had a serious stabilizing effect on the School. Beveridge left in 1937.

Dahrendorf has emphasized Beveridge's single-minded pursuit of his goals, which verged on an obsession. In fact, Beveridge's undoing as Director, apart

from his over-reliance on the Secretary, began with his obsession for developing "the Natural Bases of Social Science". He told the Rockefeller Foundation that that was the wish of his professors and told his professors that Rockefeller wanted it that way. Had the sociology of science and technology existed at the time, it might have fit the bill; but it did not and it had not. A zoologist by the name of Lancelot Hogben, who kept toads on the premises and disagreed with everyone, took the chair in 1930 – and left it in 1937, when it was obvious that he lacked the support of Rockefeller and his fellow professors.

I am taking Dahrendorf on his word here – the description of the events does not demonstrate why the Director's obsession for the "Natural Basis of Social Science" should have been his undoing; institutional entrepreneurs often have fixed ideas, some of them innocent. Dahrendorf continues to describe other undermining events, three of which occurred in 1934. There were conflicts between Beveridge and the Student Union and between Beveridge and the politologist Harold Laski, in both cases over the freedom of speech; the Director was horrified that the School might be perceived as "Red". On the other side of the political divide was a hasty promise to extract the library of the Frankfurt Institute from Germany. All these decisions were made autocratically, even if some were later accepted by his professors or his sponsors. In the same year, Beveridge was instrumental in creating the Academic Assistance Council for refugees: many refugee scientists from Germany and Austria came to LSE in the 1930s.

Beveridge wanted to resign from his post as early as 1929, and true to form, he concocted a secret plan that would gracefully retire him into a chair of economics. When the plan became known, however, the LSE professors opposed it and Rockefeller refused to finance it, withdrawing his support from the School. In the eyes of the Rockefeller Foundation's representatives, LSE was in a mess by 1935, with no rescue plan in sight.[7] In 1937, Beveridge left for Oxford and managed to negotiate a deal permitting Ms. Mair to remain until 1938, beyond her retirement age. Professor Alexander Carr-Saunders stepped into Beveridge's post.

Should Beveridge be seen as an institutional entrepreneur in his role as the School's first successful and, in his last years, unsuccessful administrator? Or should he be seen as the Chairman of the Committee that produced the Beveridge Report in 1942, making him, at least in Dahrendorf's eyes, „the father of the modern welfare state" (p. 154)?[8] Observe that in his second role Beveridge did

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[7] Dahrendorf cites critics who suggested that Rockefeller "called the tune" at LSE, and adds that the Directors would be happy to see that "[f]or once, the School is not described as a part of the Marxist plot to subvert the existing order, but as an agent of capitalism paid to stabilize it" (p. 317).

[8] Dahrendorf gets around the problem by saying different things about Beveridge in different places: he was the greatest Director, he was horrible; he was great in planning bad in implementing, he built the School; he was awkward and asocial, he was loved by students and younger faculty... and so on.

not even know that he was the founder of an institution; it took twenty years to implement the recommendations of the Report. Here again is a clash between the two meanings of the notion of "institution": that of a formal grouping of people, an organization or an association, which can truly be seen as an enterprise; and that of a collective practice that becomes justified and taken for granted.

The "door-openers"

Dahrendorf mentions an interesting category of people who played an important role in solidifying the LSE in the first sense of the "institution", without much visibility in this role. For some reason he calls them "gatekeepers", clearly unaware of the sense in which Kurt Lewin (1947) has used the term (groups or individuals who make decisions about what is allowed in or kept out). The people Dahrendorf has in mind kept the doors open (he probably intended to say "doorstoppers") between the inside and the outside, among political factions, among academic factions, and between the mighty Director and the Secretary on the one hand and the students on the other. In the academic group, he counts Laski, in spite of his tendency to provoke scandals; Miss Mactaggart in her role as Secretary; the Registrar and, later, Secretary, Eve Evans; Dr. Vera Anstey, who took care of the student lodgings during the wartime evacuation to Cambridge; and last but not least, the porters. These people are worthy of attention because they helped a group of people who were pulled together by an institution to survive as people and as an organization, while the institutional entrepreneurs were engaged in meetings with the *Zeitgeist*. The metaphor of the doors – closed or open – became quite literal in 1968 when the students demolished the gates and then the doors installed at various places in the School by the then-Director, Sydney Caine.

Going on in style

"The job to be done at the School was not just one of style, much as style mattered", says Dahrendorf (p. 337), introducing the era of Alexander Carr-Saunders that lasted for twenty years. In the recommendation sent to the Selection Committee, Carr-Saunders was described as: ".. admirable on Committees, practical, clear-headed and judicious, very even-tempered, and magnanimous. He doesn't inspire; but he encourages. People would like and trust him; and he would stay the course" (p. 334). An ideal director, it seems, but not perceived as an entrepreneur, although he led the School through difficult times for twenty years. Why not? Because, says Dahrendorf, the School entered the period of "normalization", aided by the 1944 Education Act and the 1963 Report on Higher Education. LSE has become a normal university; additionally, the unrest of 1968 and the hostile political attitude toward the social sciences that began in late 1970s did not help to maintain "the style". One interpretation would be that a bigger and sturdier institution – a university – annexed the smaller one. One

can see an analogy with business entrepreneurship: a small company fights for survival and then growth; its success leads to its acquisition by a large company. Is this a sign of success or the end of the entrepreneurial dream? In other words, has LSE survived as an institution?

Before I move to the next section, in which I try to answer these questions, let me point out some additional lessons that can be learned from more than one hundred years of LSE history. The presence of "stars" is not necessary for a lively and effective teaching environment, but the presence of first-rate scholars is. Clifford Geertz's memory of his years at Princeton may offer a clue as to why stars are bothersome ("such a collection of luminaries set free from real-world constraints to rub up against one another might be expected to produce [a highly personalized academic politics]", 1995: 123). Another surprising insight concerns the numbers: Gellner, in agreement with Carr-Saunders and Dahrendorf, gives the expression "critical mass" the meaning opposite to the received one: a number of people "beyond which a collection of people can no longer be an intellectual community with an ongoing and continuous debate" (Gellner, 1980: 13). In his eyes, the LSE of the post-war period became a victim of the cult of growth and turned into "a factory of degrees".

As far as the institutional entrepreneurs are concerned, many commentators have noted that their one important trait is the knowledge of when to let go, with Webb quoted as a positive example and Beveridge as a negative one.[9]

Love, contingency and control

Why was it loved so much?

According to ANT, love is a necessary requirement for an artifact in a center of a macro-actor, and therefore the macro-actor itself, to survive (Latour, 1996). It certainly seems that LSE, as an artifact, enjoyed love in abundance. In the Preface to his history, Ralf Dahrendorf claims that one of the alumni asked him to express "in a word the charm of the place which so many call lovingly 'the School' as if there was no other school in the world." (p. v). He then proceeds, giving an explanation along the lines that Gabriel Tarde (1890/1962) would have called "logical reasons", but soon moves to "extra-logical" reasons:

> One word? That may be asking too much, and a word would be too little for an answer. One theme perhaps. There is forever an explosive relationship between social science and public policy. Californians worry about the San Andreas Fault and what its violent erruption might to do the peace of their homes: LSE disturbs the peace of mind of those who are directly,

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[9] Whether Webb "let go" because he wanted to, however, or because he had to is an open question.

or more often indirectly, affected by its doings through another fault line (...) between wanting to know the causes of things and wanting to change things, dispassionate study and committed action, ascetic aspirations and worldly temptations. The very location of the School defines the fault line, at the heart of the polygon which includes the Law Courts and the City, Bloomsbury and Theatreland, Whitehall and Westminster. (...)

This is where the architectural as well as the geological metaphor ends, for it was never just the common roof which united the School. LSE may be permanently threatened by quakes of one kind or another, but it is also a place which engenders a special kind of loyalty among its members. LSE matters to those who have come to it. It is not just a few lines in their curricula vitae, an educational experience, or even a first-rate university, but an institution which has laid claim to a part of the hearts and souls of many. (...)

For the major part of its first century (...) the School was a place to work and to play, to spend long days in earnest seminar and corridor talk as well as on frivolous pursuits like lunch-hour dances, to make friends, and for not a few to find their partners for life. LSE creates a common sense of belonging for people who recognize each other wherever they meet..." (pp. v-vi)

The first part of Dahrendorf's utterance is a correct description of specificity of the School as an idea; it is hardly an explanation of its success, however. A great many academic organizations that were trying to combine "dispassionate study and committed action" have either vanished or have given weight to the one side. The location of the School in the center of the city is already a clue, and far more than a metaphor. What is in the center of the city is in the center of public attention. To move out of the city, unless to a city of its own, as Microsoft did, is equal to moving out of that attention, as both the directors and the porters fully understood.

Even more explanatory power can be attributed to the "extra-logical" reasons explored by Dahrendorf: the love and loyalty of the School's alumni. But why did they love it so much?

I think that Dahrendorf provides an answer, both in the quote and in the book, but does not label it. I would say that the School, unlike many other academic organizations, constituted a complete world. He mentions "work and play", but only in another place does he mention an aspect central to my view: from the inception, women constituted a natural and integral part of the School, not only as students, but also as people in high positions, formally or informally. Additionally, because of the evening students, the age of the student population varied, unlike the situation in other universities. This complete world was also due to the high percentage of foreign faculty and students; again, they were not there as tokens of some alien group (Austrian émigrés, Indian exchange students), but as full-fledged members of the School who brought their alterity – their defining difference – with them and mixed it into LSE. Granted, the code of conduct was very "British", but it was, and is, a theatrical Britishness, at which

the foreigners can actually beat the locals.

LSE was thus a micro-world, and a world easy to love: full of variety, based on irresolvable tensions (between theory and practice, between political left and right), and turning this tension into a source of energy rather than disruption (a "tamed paradox", as it were).

Additionally, as Dahrendorf points out, it was never "an ivory tower": "on the contrary, truly academic pursuits always involved a battle to keep the noise of the outside world out" (p. 301). No wonder that it felt like taking part in history just to be there. What role had the institutional entrepreneurs in all of this?

Contingency or control? An anthill

Does the emergence of LSE conform to the model of institutionalization as a contingent process, or to the idea of instituting – the result of effective control exerted by the entrepreneurs? Both.

Let me first review Dahrendorf's reasoning: I am, after all, piggy-backing on his work, and he is a great sociologist who has his own explanation. He starts with the lucky complementarity of Webb's visions and Hewins's hard work: necessary but not sufficient. He also notes alliances, but these are also a work of entrepreneurs, and I would give them greater weight. Then he brings fashion into the equation: "The 'five Es' which made up the field of intellectual forces in which LSE came into being – Education, Economics, Efficiency, Equality, Empire – were associated with the great or at least fashionable names of the time" (p. 25). Dahrendorf hastens to add that they did not add to a coherent philosophy – on the rationalist but unproven assumption that coherent philosophies are the key to success. A point that I find convincing, however, is that during its inception LSE provided a forum for trying new ideas and objectives at the time when the old, Gladstonian ones were in disarray.

So what did the institutional entrepreneurs actually do? They recruited, enrolled, translated the interests, and stabilized the connections, just as actants and actors building a macro actor do. The interesting aspect of this case, however, is that the allies practically begged to be enrolled. Dahrendorf himself comments on the Treasury Committee's cue to LSE: "Those were the times!" (p. 93). Indeed, the times when he was the Director were very different.

In this light, the relevance of the garbage can model becomes evident. In a given time and place, a *Zeitgeist* met the institutional entrepreneurs who picked up/translated/invented an idea that fit both it and the sponsors who were willing to respond to the call. The rest is history, one is prompted to say, but that would be too glib. The garbage can theory does not exploit its own metaphor on one point: what reaction is occurring to produce an effect (a decision or, better yet, an institution – after all, a decision seems to be momentary whereas an institution "ferments" for a long time). One could ask: What is the role of the institutional

entrepreneurs in this metaphorical picture? Are they enzymes?

I would like to suggest a metaphor that might combine both models: an institution as an anthill.[10] It is not a building erected according to a plan; it is a practice of long standing, taken for granted by the ants; and if the ants might not know what justifies its existence, the biologists certainly do. The anthill is a part of an ecosystem, and can be built only in specific places where specific materials are available, and at specific times. It takes many ants to build it, and as individuals they are indispensable but not irreplaceable. Who are the institutional entrepreneurs? The ants who start the building – the idea being the queen? It is tempting to say that they are warriors – male ants with wings. This would be unfair, however, as warriors do not work and institutional entrepreneurs do. Each metaphor reaches the end of its usefulness at some point.

As for now, however, the metaphor of an institution as an anthill and the observation that institutional entrepreneurs are not necessarily those individuals who become heroes of popular narratives rest on the history of LSE only. In what follows, I briefly present two other cases to support my analysis. In the spirit of grounded theory, I first report an effort similar to that of establishing LSE, which failed. Second, I briefly recall the history of building a school without building a School – the Chicago school of sociology.

How anthills emerge

Young universities in old Europe

This section is based on a study of an attempt to establish a new university in Northern Germany, as reported by Czarniawska and Wolff (1998), which we called the NGU. It originated in the wave of the EU initiatives to stimulate growth in what was considered underdeveloped regions of Europe. Thus in 1983, the Christian-Democratic Regional Government of the Northern Province approached (or was approached by) what was then the only private university in Germany.[11] Compared with other parts of Germany, the North had an inadequate educational system, and the rate of innovation lower than in the rest of the country. The investment rate was also low during the 1980s. It was believed that a new university could rejuvenate and stimulate the region. The provincial government and the representatives of the university agreed on a plan of cooperation for the province.

By engaging in the launching of a private university, the government was solving some of its own problems as well as those of the province. During the 1970s, the previous government had promised one of the cities in the region that they would found a polytechnic there. The land had been acquired and

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[10] The metaphor was previously used to describe open-source communities (Lefkowitz, 2002).

[11] This university was founded at the beginning of the 1980s on the basis of an existing anthroposophical hospital.

developed, it was formally dedicated in a symbolic opening ceremony, and the necessary legislation was enacted. As a consequence of a budget squeeze, however, the government had been forced to postpone the establishment of the university, although the legal arrangements were still valid.

The years 1983-4 were dedicated to generating support for the idea and creating networks of people and institutions to make its implementation possible. No professional academics were involved during this phase, which was dominated by politicians and administrators. On 26 September 1984, the university was officially founded. The act of incorporation declared that one of the fundamental functions of the university was to create a bridge between Scandinavia and the continent. Further, all faculty members and all students were to engage in a philosophical discourse as an obligatory part of the courses and research program. Theory and practice were to be combined at the various levels inside and outside the university.

The founding act was followed by intensive negotiations with the government. On 7 June 1985, the provincial government announced its endorsement of a second private institution of higher education in the Federal Republic. The act contained specific rules for such things as the organization of the university; the design of the curriculum; the structure of the faculties; and, in particular, overall control exercised by the government. There was a stipulation that no faculty should start teaching without confirming to the ministry that its financial basis was secure. It should be mentioned that the act itself required a change in the law concerning higher education.

The emerging organization was dependent on a fund controlled by a board including representatives from well-known German multinational companies. These people were supposed to act as ambassadors for the university, while guaranteeing (or at least contributing to) its financial basis. A formal opening ceremony attended by government representatives marked the formal start of the university's life. In August 1985, the first professor was engaged for the Faculty of Economics to speed the process of designing the curriculum and organizing the Faculty.

In the autumn of 1985, the board decided that the head of administration was allowing his private business commitments to mingle to too great an extent with those of the university. His unfortunate combination of personal and institutional interests had been criticized by some of the sponsors and led to the termination of his employment. The vulnerable process of building a new organization had been disrupted. Reactions varied. The still small group of academics sought to launch the image of a private university governed by professional academic norms. Networks of supporting colleagues were activated in order to demonstrate the honesty and seriousness of the emerging organization. This external support was needed, particularly to combat the gathering criticism from the other university in the province, which was a state organization. All this turbulence, however, served to speed up events.

On 1 October 1986, the NGU welcomed its first students in a ceremony held in a church. On 3 October, 400 selected guests from Germany, Austria, and Scandinavia gathered on the Faculty's premises to celebrate its formal opening. Symbolically, the university had now come into being. This meant, however, that the NGU started operating before a steady resource basis had been secured. At the same time, the original idea of the "university as a profit-making machine" had disappeared with the entrepreneurial head of administration. The leadership now counted upon the support promised by the provincial government, which in turn was expected to elicit supplementary support from the private sector. The university ended its first year of operations (1986-87) with a deficit of 1.2 million DM. Although the difference was covered by the provincial government, the newspapers had dramatic headlines: "Is the private university founded in 1984 nearing its end? A gap of millions: NGU facing bankruptcy." The reaction from the university was to close ranks, at least in public: "The University is strengthened by the crisis," claimed the leaders. The attacks continued, however. The University Presidents' Conference in the province was unanimous: "Don't pay for the NGU!"

In March 1988, the headlines cried: "NGU needs more money than ever!" The articles referred to the NGU's estimate that a further 5 million DM were needed to survive for another academic year – something, it was suggested, that had been previously concealed. In fact, the figures matched the estimates published by the same newspapers two years earlier, when 10 million DM was the amount given as the annual budget. The difference lay more in the long-range budget, which showed a tendency to increase – a characteristic of all big projects, which always turn out more expensive than predicted. A broader political consensus was sought on the question of financing the university. It was noted in some quarters that stricter financial control should be exercised over its operations. On the whole, however, the attitudes were positive and, in May 1988, a third faculty was opened. The crisis seemed to be over and the stabilization on course.

The same year, however, one of the most spectacular postwar scandals, involving a leading figure in the government, shook the Northern Province and its stable political order. The new government had a different ideology regarding both privatization and anthroposophy. Private universities in particular were regarded as contradicting the Social Democratic Party's idea of higher education as a public concern. After approximately six months of negotiations, the NGU was closed down by a special Regional Government Act. Some of the consulting activities were transferred to a research institute situated in one of the cities. Some of the students were admitted to the neighboring university and some to other schools in the country.

While Rolf Wolff and I offered a detailed analysis of the NGU story, only one aspect is relevant here. The institutional entrepreneurs (and there is no doubt that the founders of NGU deserve such a label) underestimated an institutionalized union of states and schools in Europe (Ramirez and Boli, 1987). Also, one can

claim with the hindsight, they enrolled weak allies: the Scandinavians instead of US schools, as their followers did. And the translation of interests – the companies that were to become sponsors – did not hold. Does it mean that they failed as institutional entrepreneurs? Not from the anthill perspective.

In January 1999, Gary Wolfram, analyzing the situation of private colleges in USA, pointed out that Germany still had only one private university – the one mentioned above. He was probably not well informed, or else the new anthill was build practically overnight. By 2002, there were 46 private universities in Germany (Steghaus-Kovac, 2002; Wallace, 2002). All the commentators come with a similar explanation: the declining reputation of public universities in Germany. From the model to the world in the 19th century, only Heidelberg made it to the 2004 *Times Higher Educational Supplement*'s top fifty best universities – in 47th place (Bhatti, 2005). So, although the NGU failed as an organization, it contributed to a rise of a new institution.

Need a school to be a School?

In this section, I briefly recapitulate the history of the Chicago school of sociology, as an illustration of an institutional entrepreneurship that does not involve or concentrate upon the building of formal organizations. The institution in question is, as most people agree, "the first successful American program of collective sociological research", which, rather than launching a specific approach, propagated commitment to a firm connection between theory and field research (Blumer, 1984: xv, 224) and to a thesis that social life must be always located in a time and place (Abbott, 1999). It is necessary, however, to confront a likely critique first: wasn't Chicago school of sociology (a school of thought) dependent on the existence of University of Chicago (a formal organization)? Yes it was; John D. Rockefeller, Sr. (the main sponsor) and William Rainey Harper (the first president) are legendary entrepreneurs – one in finance, the other in academia (Feffer, 1993). Yet they have not established either the institution of a university, which goes back to Middle Ages in Europe; the institution of modern higher education, which is usually attributed to Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835); or even the US university focusing on research, following in the footsteps of Johns Hopkins and then Clark (Bulmer, 1984). University of Chicago has been highly successful, however, in that it first saw the birth of the pragmatist school of philosophy; then the Chicago school of sociology; and, finally, the Chicago school of economics (McCloskey, 1994). As William James put it facetiously but acutely, speaking of philosophy: "Here [at Harvard] we have thought, but no school. At Yale a school but no thought. Chicago has both." (1903, as quoted by Bulmer, 1984: 28).

Andrew Abbott (1999) locates the beginnings of his story of the Chicago school at 1892, when Albion W. Small founded the first-ever Department of Sociology; Bulmer (1984) focuses on the years 1915-1935, when William I.

Thomas and then Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess set the grounds for what became a legend.

The legend of a school of thought has its standard narrative, too. It is usually a story of a giant mind, followed by mediocre-minded crowds of disciples. As an aphorism, it takes the form of what Merton (1965/1993) called OTSOG, or "on the shoulders of giants", tracing it back to the 12th century. And yet the strong suspicion is that this is yet another stylized story of science, as opposed to the actual one – that the science stands on a pyramid of midgets – an anthill image, after all. Chicago school is a perfect example of "the power of associations", as Latour would have called it. How did Thomas convinced Znaniecki, a philosopher, to read thousands of letters of Polish peasants? Most likely, because he had an unusual argument: perhaps the first-ever research grant.[12] They were clearly good at enrolling but they also had a boundary object (Star and Griesemer, 1989): the City of Chicago. Bulmer put it succinctly: "The dense, highly integrated, local network of teachers and graduate students carrying out a program of research in one city centered around common problems" (1984: 1). Was that their invention? No; as Jazbinsek *et al.* (2001) convincingly demonstrate, Chicago's scholars were inspired by Charles Booth's seventeen volumes on *Life and Labour of the People of London* from 1892 and followed the blueprint of *Großstadt-Dokumente* edited in the years 1904-1908 by Hans Ostwald in Berlin. Although this latter research made no impact on German sociology (judged by German sociologists as too journalistic) and did not produce a school in the sense used in science studies, scholars like Louis Wirth translated it, in many senses of the word, to fit US circumstances.

One important aspect of the Chicago school was its *portavoce*, the *American Journal of Sociology*, with its first editor, Albion W. Small; and its connection to an emerging macro actor, the American Sociological Society (16 presidents of the Society in the years 1924-1950 were either Chicago graduates or Chicago faculty). In 1915, a year after the Chicago library acquired all 51 volumes of the Berlin series, Robert E. Park explicated, for the first time, the ideas of urban research to be conducted in Chicago. It was an innovative way of doing research, but its attractiveness may have been based on other reasons as well. The Chicago school might have become popular for what it missed, at least in the eyes of Abbott: "Chicago writing lacks the Latinate literacy and high tone of the Europeans" (1999, p. xxx). Chicago writers wrote plain, realistic prose, but they were closer to the novelists than to the natural scientists:

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[12] Znaniecki was the Director of the Polish Emigrants' Protective Association in Warsaw; they met in 1913. Until then, Znaniecki kept his scientific work (on Henri Bergson) separate from his administrative duties (with the help of Russian authorities who did not allow Poles to become university professors). When visiting USA in 1914, Znaniecki became stranded because of the war, Thomas arranged an appointment for him at Chicago. Znaniecki returned to Poland in 1920 and became the first Polish professor of sociology at Poznan University (Kaczynski, 1997).

> Chicago urban sociologists and novelists intellectually rubbed elbows, and conceptually and methodologically, aesthetically and thematically stood as primary reference points for one another. They felt no qualms about acknowledging this kinship (Cappetti, 1993: 32).

The Chicago school of sociology is often compared to LSE, particularly by its historian, Martin Bulmer, who comes from LSE. There were similarities: a vision of a close connection between theory and practice, translated to fit local realities, a community of scholars of different ages, sexes, and nationalities (both elements also present in the NGU), persuasive self-presentations, and a superb ability to associate. The difference was that Thomas, Park, and Burgess left most administrative and financial arrangements to others (mainly to Small, who was decisive in creating both the Department and the Local Community Research Committee); did not have a political mission on a national level (but did have a social mission towards the local community); and, in spite of internal tolerance and openness to external influences, were confined to one discipline. The later schism between the proponents of quantitative and qualitative scholars cut deep, therefore, and shook the fundaments of the school (although Bulmer sees causes of decline even in Parks's unwillingness to deal with administrative matters, and the increasing irritation with Chicago's dominance in the rest of USA).

However, the networking skills of the Chicagoans were unparalleled. Not only did they start a national association and a national journal, but they also had dining clubs for graduate students, the Sociology Club, and the Society for Social Research with its three main activities: evening meetings, the Summer Institute (which reassembled Chicago alumni), and the *Bulletin*.

Bulmer thus summarizes his history of Chicago school of sociology:

> At the heart of any academic school are one or two individuals with a body of ideas or a compelling vision that attracts others, binds the group together, and gives it a greater degree of intellectual cohesion than is usual among colleagues in academic social science departments. A "school" is ultimately the product of that personal quality of intellectual passion or self-confidence that emanates from one or two individuals who stand out at some distance from their colleagues. In sociology, (...) leadership was shared, initially between Thomas and Park, then between Park and Burgess. (...) Thomas alone would not have created the Chicago school, and Burgess alone could not have sustained it. (1984: 214).

Observe that the first sentence is a perfect description of a formation of an actor-network (lacking only the artifacts, especially *American Journal of Sociology*, but its role has been emphasized before): a heart composed of one or two actants, a body of ideas, and the forces of attraction and binding that result in stabilization. But the second sentence lapses into the traditional narrative of entrepreneurship: there must be a hero figure; and if here are several, it is only because together they possess this outstanding quality that distinguishes entrepreneurs from other people. This oxymoron is present already in the definition of a "school" that

Bulmer adopts at the outset: "The paradigm's core formulations are those of the founder-leader, but the full blown paradigm is typically a collective enterprise" (quote on p. 2). An actor-network needs a figurehead.

Do institutions require entrepreneurs?

The final conclusion to be drawn from the three cases might be, therefore, that the quality that distinguishes institutional entrepreneurs from other people is that they are entrepreneurial. This is hardly surprising, but what does it mean? It seems that such people are equipped with a great deal of energy, that they are very good at forging alliances, and that they have a special sense that allows them to feel "what is in the air": the smell of the *Zeitgeist*.

Are these skills or traits learnable or teachable? Hardly so. As with artists, one can improve the technique, but not learn a talent. But do institutions require entrepreneurs? This is not certain, as most of the reasoning about their role is *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*: when an institution has been established, people who were involved in establishing it are seen as decisive for its establishment (*cherchez le entrepreneur!*). As suggested before, most practices that have not been institutionalized probably also had their ardent proponents, but they have been forgotten. Also, as seen in the case of NGU, the practices can become institutionalized, even when entrepreneurs fail. In a sense, as the subsequent decline of Chicago school of sociology well illustrates, they all fail sooner or later. A school of thought cannot be dominant forever, but its impact – in this case, a transformation of the discipline that survived the subsequent schools – might last, and this is the emergence of an institution.

There can be no doubt that "institutional entrepreneurs" are characters in a narrative of the emergence of institutions. They are attributes of such genre, and are required to achieve the narrative coherence. The question might then be asked: who is interested in this genre and why? The answer seems obvious to me: people who, like the founders of LSE, of NGU, and the Chicago school of sociology believe that society needs a change and that it is possible to change it through research and education. Allowing the narrative of institutional entrepreneurship to be enriched with the image of an anthill might make it more realistic – not diminishing the heroism of ants, only multiplying their number and character and stressing the connections.

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