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## Extended Abstract for OAP 2016 “Materiality & Institutions”

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### **The Interpretative Frame: the link between the Institution and its Artifact Carrier**

Artifacts can convey institutions (Blanc & Huault, 2014). Or stated differently, actors can transform and manipulate material objects so they reflect and shape “cultural-cognitive, normative and regulative elements that provide stability and meaning to social life” (Scott, 2008: 222). Because it operates by representing the culture, values and symbols associated with a particular institution and/or by being infused with new institutional content, an artifact is named instantiation (Hilpinen, 2011).

Through a case study implemented in Denmark and France, the paper studies how actors implement intervention works, such as contemporary adjustments – renovation or extension –, in listed buildings without disrupting their embodied Heritage. A listed building is a protected monument that highlights national pride or memory. In the study, six listed buildings are analysed: three in Denmark and three in France. The listed building’s legitimacy relies on its authenticity whose respect by actors is essential to maintain the institutional protection, as it is the material representation, or instantiation of the Listed-Buildings Institution. However, intervention works to change such an artifact lead to various debates among actors, as the majority of current listed buildings were not originally constructed to last, *i.e.* to be transmitted to future generations (Choay, 2007). One debate during intervention works tackles the issue of what needs to be or not to be considered in terms of Heritage.

Through a constructivist grounded-theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014) and a Scandinavian Institutional lens (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996), the research allows the understanding of how actors succeed in symbolically constructing the instantiation, so they can latter materially work on the artifact in a way it keeps conveying the institution (Monteiro

& Nicolini, 2014). Indeed, within neo-institutional theory, current studies only focus on how the modification of the instantiation can impact or change the institution (Jones, Maoret, Massa & Svejnova, 2012; Raviola & Norbäck, 2013). What is still unknown is nevertheless how an instantiation can be changed while keeping conveying the institution that circumscribed it. In the study, I therefore emphasise that actors need first to design, with the help of the three institutional pillars given by Scott (2013), a shared interpretative frame to select relevant building materials. By doing so, they could thus modify an existing building in regards to what building's authenticity deserves to be respected. This frame acts in fact as a preliminary step to implement the materialisation of the intangible ideas.

The paper is thus focused on the ***interpretative frame that symbolically links the institution and its instantiation and on how actors design it***. More specifically, I explore what constitutes such a frame and what its role is regarding the interrelations that exist between an institution, its artifact carrier and the actors who work on it. Indeed, if the Scandinavian Institutionalism literature already explains how actors can translate into practice an intangible idea, the question of the components of such an institutional frame remains overlooked (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). That is why the dissertation contributes to the neo-institutional literature by arguing that such frame is built by means of the three institutional pillars, which are the components actors play with to know to what extent they can unfold action.

Throughout the study, I analyse the practice implemented by a collective of actors who have to tangibly modify an artifact, here a listed building, while keeping its instantiational character coming from the Listed-Buildings Institution. Consequently, to enable such one and only shared material practice, the paper underlines the importance of such an interpretative frame so the actors can share and intertwine their interpretations of the building's authenticity, *i.e.* the main leitmotiv on which institution of Listed-Buildings relies and takes its legitimacy from, in order to work towards the same goal. The aim for actors is thus to use the interpretative frame as a way to collectively interpret one specific but essential institutional feature in order to collectively do a practice that fits with it.

*De facto*, I argue that this *a posteriori* construction of the interpretative frame facilitates collective decision-making, as it acts as a shared and stabilised knowledge resource among actors. And by extension, I demonstrate and picture how the translation of the interpretative

frame into an artifact reinforces the legitimacy of the institution and its taken-for-grantedness.

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