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To cite this version:

Christophe Gibout. Social transaction: A relevant paradigm for the sociology of sexuality and gender?. INSEP - Journal of the International Network for Sexual Ethics & Politics, 2015, 3 (1), pp.23-38. 10.3224/insep.v3i1.03 . hal-02383620

HAL Id: hal-02383620

https://hal.science/hal-02383620

Submitted on 30 May 2022

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INSEP Vol. 3, Issue 1/2015, pp. 23–38

https://doi.org/10.3224/insep.v3i1.02

Social transaction: A relevant paradigm for the sociology of sexuality and gender?

Christophe Gibout

Abstract: This article explores the possible utility of the Social Transaction Paradigm approach to sexual research, sketching its theoretical outline, exploring key studies and showing its applicability as an alternative and possibly innovative approach to the study of sexuality.

The Social Transaction Paradigm (STP) was developed during the 1970's by researchers working at Louvain University (Belgium). The paradigm was initially developed as a means to investigate the crisis between the Flemings and the Walloons who disagreed fundamentally on the future of the Catholic University of Leuven and on the language(s) that had to be used for lectures. The scientific value of the STP was immediately widely recognised. Since its initial formulation, it has proven its efficiency in describing and explaining many different situations, such as environmental governance, urban policies or trans-frontiers relationships. Initially developed by Jean Rémy et al. (1978), the STP has been further developed by, among others Maurice Blanc (1992 to 2009) and others (Foucart et al., 2013; Freynet et al., 1998; Fusulier & Marquis, 2008; Gibout et al., 2009; Schurmans, 2013). During the early 90's, the STP has been mobilized by Van Campenhoudt and others (Van Campenhoudt et al., 1994). In the sociology of sexuality and gender, specially concerning the question of AIDS governance and of loose relationships with the AIDS risk the gay libertines had to trans-act between the "sexual wandering" and the infectious risk bound to the pandemic. These initial studies of the nineties were followed up more recently by new studies dealing with new sexual practices, such as transsexuality, the picking up of young people, swapping, cruising-for-sex, gay barebacking or sex tourism, etc. (Audouit & Gibout, 2013; Carvajal-Sánchez, 2013-a & b; Dayer, 2005 to 2013-b; Gouyon, 2013; Gourarier, 2013, etc.) After a relatively quiet period of two decades, researchers seemed to rediscover the scientific value of the STP for doing sociological research, and for the sociology of sexuality in particular. The fact is that, suddenly, many researchers saw the value of this paradigm to question scientifically these objects. The social transaction approach is useful to imagine a compromise without dishonest compromise, a compromise that is limited in the space and in the time and is the result of the balance of powers at the hic-et-nunc of the social situation. The social transaction help to imagine and to interpret a situation of negotiations and "reasonable settlements"1 (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008), where to transcend the initial situation of "disagreement" (Rancière, 1995) is accepted "the continuity of the gain and the loss" (Simmel, 2009). Thus, sexual relationships are seen as unstable and

1 Unless otherwise specified, all the translations are of the author

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temporary transactional products, which return insight into the livable social situation and authorize the resilience (Cyrulnik, 2012; Segal, 1986) without denying the conflictual nature of relationships in society. In this discussion, I will critically evaluate the usefulness of the STP for sexuality studies. First, I will briefly present the paradigm, its genesis and its theoretical foundations. Second, I will give an overview of some of the major researches concerning the question of the sexuality mobilizing the

paradigm. The founding works will be presented in order to show the way this paradigm seized the question of the sex and of the gender. For its most recent works, I will use a scalar approach, from the sexuality in the public space to the interactions within the individual himself, from the transactions that mobilize numerous actors to the ones that people do with themselves. I will conclude this discussion by critically discussing the value of the STP for doing sexuality studies.

A brief overview of the STP

For a better knowledge of the STP we need to look at the social context in which it was developed and the theoretical questions it sought to address. Understanding the social transaction supposes a historically situated proofreading by its genesis and through the words of those who have "invented" it. The social transaction is the fruit at the same time of a historic circumstance – the political, academic and religious context within Belgian society (Servais, 2013) and the linguistic crisis within the Belgian University of Leuven during the 1960's and the 1970's – and of a critical review of Georg Simmel's works in order to solve the scientific crisis into sociology. On one hand, "the social transaction appeared in the Jean Rémy, Liliane Voyé and Emile Servais founding work (1978). It testifies of the will of his authors to go out of a double crisis, social and scientific. They were all three teachers at the Catholic University of Leuven and, when the linguistic crisis returned its inevitable partition, the French-speaking part being expelled from Leuven in Flanders, they belonged in the exit of the crisis by the creation of the Catholic University of Leuven to Louvain-la-Neuve, in Wallonia. This practice of the transaction fed their theoretical reflexion and has been its compost or its substratum" (Blanc, 2009-a : 26) On the other hand, "To produce or to reproduce? Toward a sociology of social transaction" (Rémy et al., 1978) is also an answer to a scientific crisis that has crossed French speaking sociology from the 1960's to the 1970's. The hypothesis that the cleavage between structuralism – widely dominating – and the "sociology of the actor", between the "Self-Production of Society" (Touraine, 1973) " and "the Inheritors" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964) or the "Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970) can be transcended by a transaction between these two scientific currents. As written by Georg Simmel (1981), society is crossed and structured by inflexible but necessary oppositions – one to another (male/female, tradition/modernity, innovation/preservation, closeness/distance, etc.). To reduce the tension, without ever

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removing it totally, transactions are possible as so many temporary compromises which make possible and livable the "being-together" (Rémy, 1994 & 2005). "The paradox of the social transaction is to have to permanently reconcile the irreconcilable (…) It is here necessary to move closer to theories which are implacably brought into conflict, by avoiding a "sociological ecumenism" (Dubar, 1998: 57) which would be a superficial syncretism. The social transaction does not delete the tensions and the contradictions (…) The social transaction allows, more modestly, to make live opposed theories, while noting their incompatibility" (Blanc, 2009-a: 31) As Jean Rémy, Liliane Voyé and Emile Servais (1978) said, the social transaction is more than a notion or a metaphor but still less than a concept. By the way, this go-between situation is also an opportunity that gives the paradigm some more flexibility and a capacity to adapt itself to the present. "More than a sum of concepts, paradigm is the basic image from which an interpretation of the reality imagines itself. Paradigm is also the organizing and inductive principle of the construction of hypotheses and theoretical interpretations" (Rémy et al., 1978: 87) Using the sociology of social transaction is also a way to consider the conflict as an essential part of the society. "The negotiation and the imposition are both essential modalities of the social transaction" (ibid.). Any interaction supposes conflict that is always inevitably present. The question is how to resolve it. The sociology of social transaction is not a sociology of the consensus but, much more, a sociology of the compromise and of the negotiation within a balance of powers. "The conflict,

sometimes, is solved by a negotiated compromise; but it is frequent to be in the impossibility to negotiate and the conflict is temporarily solved by a trial of strength. Between those two poles, there are all the social transactions where negotiations and imposition harmonize in variable proportions. The question of the conflicting cooperation is at the heart of the social transaction" (Blanc, in, M. Blanc et al., 1994: 15) "So social agents are involved in an on-going process, where conflict and consensus are combined. The term "social transaction" is more relevant than the world "negotiation" as its extension is broader. A social transaction is embodied in a context giving constraints and opportunities. They are effective on a cultural level (structural) and on a social level (structurel). In relation with this context, social agents have some degrees of freedom which explain a semi-random reaction. (…) In this model, central management is not underlying co-ordination and transformation (…) The social transaction paradigm offers a methodology fitted in a context in which the autonomy of social agents increases. [Now therefore] it is highly relevant for sociological research today" (Rémy & Foucart, 2013: 35) Furthermore, the opportunity of this paradigm is to facilitate the hybridization between "research in action" and "research on the action", between scientific professional and practical practices that can meet, exchange and fruit mutually. Research through this paradigm mainly focuses on the people engaged into/around the process that is analyzed and objectivation is a device negotiated by a meeting between a commitment into social action and chosen concepts and theories. By leaving of the factual reality of the survey and by resorting to reflexivity, by "studying social practices to solve the complexity without reducing it" (Rémy, 1996: 19), the social

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transaction offers new opportunities to seize better transformations in the heart of the investigated social situations, the underlaying values, the balance of powers in set, the said and the unspoken, the "figure and figuration of the third"2 (Simmel, 1964, 145 – 169)… In this way, social transaction sociology is both a paradigm to explain and a method to do sociology. On one hand, it is a paradigm that helps us to give sense to the complexity of society by taking care on the under-textuality of relationships. On the other hand, social transaction is a way to act as a sociologist who is concernred about the multivocal character of the society and who invent, a reading of social interactions based on the conflict and the compromise as mainsprings of the society. In one phrase, the social transaction is "a hybrid stemming from a permanent invention, from contradictory orders" (Rémy, 1998: 35).

The first period: Some foundational works using the STP in sexuality studies.

There are numerous sociological papers exploring sexuality, which mobilize the social transaction paradigm. Nevertheless, before elaborating this panorama, it is advisable to return to the prolegomena of these researches on sexuality and gender, which mobilize the social transaction paradigm. In fact, these objects have been originally questioned under a three-pronged approach: sociology of family, sociology of work identities and professional subjectivities, sociology of health. Family is seen as a social structure where interactions and relationships are less codified, with a more vague and fluctuating definition of the roles and the functions of each of the members. Nevertheless sexual identities exist and family socialization allows the apprenticeship of values, standards and roles. Different research studies show that some reasonable settlements are usual in order to establish the order of the social/sexual roles and of the respective social/sexual territories in the everyday life. These adjustments are sometimes explicit but, often, they remain tacit, basing on "silent negotiations" (Schurmans, 1994). The works of Kellerhals (1992) also demonstrates that the commitment of couples in the common life are based on interpersonal transactions between different ethics and conceptions, even rival ones. So, partners with love lives develop compromises – renegotiable and renegotiated over time –, the purpose of which is the sustainability of the life of that couple. Another avenue is the research of Claude Dubar about the working identities of male and female. "Double transaction and

sexual differentiation: the interpretation of two professional biographies" (Dubar, 1994) points to the existence of a double transaction "to mean at the same time the duality of the process and its progressive, groping and exploratory character" (Dubar, 1994: 114). According to Dubar, a man and a woman, develop differently their negotiations with others and with themselves to stabilize their social identity. This transaction, at the same time external and internal to the actor, is translated by the implementation of negotiations, conflicts and

2 « Die Figur des Dritten » (G. Simmel), translation of the author.

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compromises, doubts and contradictions, to operate an identity conversion, here in a professional situation. The research also shows, in a rather obvious way, an effect of gender on the process of double transaction that is engaged in these experiences of professional identity conversion. Far from a logic of social reproduction, but also not obviously free to produce their own identity, women and men develop different strategies of action and mobilize different forms of identity and of social network. "The choice of one man and one woman to explain the model of the double transaction (…) ask the question of the sexual differentiation of the double transaction. [The cultural and identical differences attached to the sexes and their social roles remain. And] the hypothesis of sexual identical dynamics adorned me completely acceptable and more heuristics. [Difference of management of the professional mobility, the use of natural categories which make sexual the modes of management of the company, sexual effects of the forms of socialization, over-representation of the men in the decision-making authorities, sexual difference according career path, all have effects] It thus seems to me that the model of the double transaction allows to understand certain essential mechanisms of the disparities between men and women in the professional field. And this without reducing the professional identical forms to by-products or by-products of identity of sex" (Dubar, 1994: 121 – 122) According to the last aspect, the researchers mobilize the paradigm in order to give sense to their explorations of AIDS-related sexualities and AIDS-related social relationships (Peto et al., 1992; Van Campenhoudt et al., 1994). "The sexual relation establishes an interaction characterized by the interdependence between the partners. The notion of sexual relation is understood in a wide sense containing as well the sexual relations cleanly said as all the communications and the mutual actions between the partners which precedent these relations, make them possible, give them their shape and endow them with a meaning with the eyes of the partners. (…) Our feeling is that the notion of transaction, included as methodological paradigm with heuristics function, can help to report it. In reason notably of its interest to appreciate the complex and little structured situations, where the partners produce, gradually and of a groping way, the standards of their interaction, whose evolution contains substantial uncertainty and risk." (Van Campenhoudt et al., 1994: 93 – 94) Interrogating these adaptations to the risk of AIDS in heterosexual relations, the authors analyze the way adults with various sexual partnerships react to the risk of AIDS and why they continue to keep this risk even when they understand it correctly. They show that it is less an evolutionary adaptation or an operating mode than a strategy. This awareness is fickle and the risk is taken into account (without being excluded) or repressed. The sexual relation is characterized by the interdependence of the partners and by the ceaseless process of production and transformation of the standards of the relation. In the heart of the loving rites and the sexual wanderings in the time of the AIDS, is revealed a shape of "conflicting cooperation" (Van Campenhoudt et al., 1994: 111) between the actors in interaction. There is cooperation between the sexual partners because, in a sense, they participate in the same production. There is conflict because games of power, of symbol, of knowledge, of influence distort the relationships. The sexual relation, as the social relation, is organized around couples of tensions (confidence / mistrust; image of self / presentation of self;

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emotional / physiological; competition / alliance, etc.). And the strong interdependence between the sexual partners obliges a permanent process of mutual adaptation. So many aspects which prove that social transaction is a relevant paradigm to give sense to the analysis of heterosexual wandering in the time of AIDS. Next to these 3 founding research studies, which are still mobilized to analyze the social issues of sexualities and relationships between sexual stakeholders, few works in sociology of gender or of sexuality use this paradigm until a more recent period when, from the second half of the 2000's, various studies constituted a revival of this meeting and an enforcement of the paradigm.

Some contemporary examples of sexuality studies using the STP

Among the different research studies that focus on sexuality using the social transaction approach, their eclecticism is evident. A scalar approach has been chosen to show how it could be relevant at different levels for both the sociological interrogation of sexuality and the scientific questioning of the sexual fact as the social fact. Finally, there will be a review of some recent works, judged by its own standards as a study of social transaction.

Transactions, sexuality and gender in the public space

Three research studies can be presented indicatively here. The first one concerns male gallantry and the transactions of heterosexual seduction in public places in France. The second one deals with the process of socialization to masculinity of Latin-American people. The third one focuses on male cruising-for-sex in natural spaces in the South of France. Gourarier (2013) questions French men who claim a "right for the seduction" and consider themselves as a minority victim of the feminine domination. Inspired by American "Seduction Community", these men claim: "the "French Art of Seduction" able to grasp the pleasure deriving from asymmetrical heterosexual seduction transactions, simultaneously disgarding the standards of traditional gallantery that would, according to them, endure to the disadvantage of men" (Gourarier, 2013: 205) According to her analysis, the relationships between men and women is reconstructed and determined by the members of the community to define an ideal type of the attractive man. Thus, it allows to redefine the manliness and to strengthen socially dominant concepts of masculinity. Considering that they belong to "a society of frustrated men who are dominated by the women further to the triumph of the feminism" (ibid: 208 – 209) and usually seen as stalkers, they want to become pursued, appropriating the feminine power to refuse or to follow up the advances of the women. If nowadays the seduction is governed by women, its appropriation by the men is a major resource of their reaction to mutual interactions. These men want to erase the expression of male interest, which they see as an expression of their

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submission to women, to reconquer an advantage in the social transaction that is the gallantry's action. The work of Fernando Carvajal Sánchez (2013-b) deals with identity construction of Colombian "half-breed-whites", which has to compose with both marital strategies, projects of whitening and rise in social status and western social representations of manliness. Mobilizing concepts of stigma (Goffman, 1963) and of presentation of self in everyday life (Goffman, 1959), this author highlights a chain of consecutive adaptations that allow for successive compromises and practices of coexistence. He demonstrates that the identical construction of masculinity and the "europeanity" (to be white and western) for the half-bloods South American is a transactional product. During the various moments of his life (infancy, adolescence, marital choices, etc.), the boy – and then the adult – is going to integrate or to reject some standards or values of his membership groups and peers (Dulong et al., 2012). And he is going to participate actively – sometimes consciously – in the identical modifications

of his close relations. To avoid losing face or to put up a good show, he is going to enter into some rites of passage and to adopt behaviors of manliness (fighting with the others, having homophobes comments, not hugging or kissing other males, etc.) and behaviors of "europeanity" (stable conjugal relation, schooled children, socially valued employment, appending a European name to the autochthonous one, etc.). All this admits him to an ideology of the masculinity which both assure him to remain aloof and satisfies his self-dignity and his relationships with others around. Another example of the research turns attention on mostly homosexual uses of natural spaces on the French Mediterranean coastline (Audouit & Gibout, 2013; Gaissad & Audouit, 2014). Here, the paradigm is particularly relevant to analyze a double social transaction: • The interactions between men cruising-for-sex and the other users of the seaside but also between different cross-categories of sexual users of different sites (beach, dune) over time. • The transactions which took place between already well-established notorious forms of the sexual appropriation of space and recent environmental protection measures. On one hand, the places of sexual practice are characterised by the transactions that spread there. Sometimes, there is some public expression and moral disapproval of a sexual practice. But, mostly, the "articulation of the notorious and the secret reports effectively the spatial dynamics (…)" of these places of trying to pick up and authorizes "(…) places more often shared than fought" (Gaissad & Audouit, 2014: 162). Both diurnal and nocturnal sexual territories are the object of "silent transactions" (Schurmans, 1994). Natives or passing people, residents or summer vacationers develop a territorial appropriation that is not without clashes. But these occasional conflicts mask a continuity of secret uses, fragile and fleeting sexual transactions among which the intimacy and the durability suppose the conflict prevention by a sharing of the space according to the various categories of users (Tourists' families / sexual wanderers; People in dunes / people on beaches; sex-cruising / coastal leisure

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activities ; etc.) and the various sexual practices (homosexuality / heterosexuality; Exhibitionism / orgy / fast meetings; vaginal sex / oral sex / anal sex; etc.). On the other hand, the research "highlights the role of public actors [local authorities, State administration, Law enforcement, etc.] and their representations and attitudes towards such "undesirable" activities as they undertake the management of these protected natural areas" (Gaissad & Audouit, 2014: 282). This sexuality, obviously gay and/or heterosexual pleasure-seekers depending of the sites, is kept in tension between the secret and the exhibition, between the said and the unspoken, between the personal freedom of the users and the environmental protection. For local authorities and administration, the question is how to deal with a problem if you do not morally admit the phenomenon and if you are still in a culture where the activity is taboo? For sex-cruisers, the question is how to maintain the tradition of the sexual practices in these places without incurring pursuits or complaints? We observe here and there forms of partial and temporary regulation of the situation, which are similar to "reasonable settlements" (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008). Actors and stakeholders compromise by surrounding some places and by abandoning others, by setting up forms of regulation (Audouit & Gibout, 2013) such as: rubbish bags hung on trees; spatial demarcation of the places to pick-up, collection of the worn condoms and the cigarette ends by gays associative volunteers, tolerance of the sexual activity in some dune zones and penalty in other zones with upper ornithological, zoological or floral interest. However, the formalization of the negotiation remains difficult because it is about practices which none are inclined to name. By understanding both the formal and informal compromise, by illustrating a conflicting collaboration and/or a compromise of coexistence, these researches point to a convergence between negotiation and social transaction (Schurmans, 2013) Next to these social transactions in the public place, others are set up at an intermediate level, for example in the sphere of the school, the friendly network or the widened family.

Transactions, sexuality and gender at a meso-level

Among the research studies that took place with this focus, two are particularly appropriate. The first focuses on the guile in the (homo)sexual transaction in popular circles in Casablanca (Morocco) and the reason why some gay Moroccans immigrate to Belgium to live their sexuality. The second focuses on the sexist violence and violence of gender in the school, in particular the effects of heterosexual normativity, on the homophobia and transphobia in academic system. Marien Gouyon (2010) explains that, in Morocco, gender identities seem to be fossilized and the non-respect of their codes is likely to engender calls to order and confusion. Over there: "the impossibility of expressing one's homosexuality cannot be perceived as the incapacity to imagine homosexuality. Thus leaving the country in order to express one's sexuality has no connection with social reality. The departure that is linked to sexuality is to be connected with the break in the social experience of an individual's personal story" (Gouyon, 2010: 312 – 313)

The reason for this self-exile is not homosexuality per se but the physical and/ or mental inability to live this sexuality. Gay Moroccans choosing to be immigrants have to compromise: live their sexuality or stay in the native country, live in the shadows or come out, precariousness at home or instability over there … This study expresses the anguish linked to weakening compromises, how transactions are transitional, precarious and sometimes suffered but always defined in order to keep both the opportunity of self-realization and the possibility to live together. For those – often the poorest and the less educated – who stayed in Morocco (O, 2013; Taïa, 2006), Marien Gouyon (2013) notice they are engaged in exchanges and renewed tacit agreement practices that connected them in a co-ordinated action. The study emphasized the tacit zone through which the social connections are made and remade. The author suggests "an overviewing reading of the social transaction, which will help understand how young men from Casablanca emancipate themselves thanks to daily events that arise" (Gouyon, 2013: 217). Getting organized in cliques, the young gays of Casablanca use guiles, gestural or linguistic codes bound to the dominant culture and to the west, lies, manipulation or thefts of the Westerners in order to make a better place into the society even they have popular social background, they are effeminate and often prostitute themselves. By introducing a culture of the guile, the precariousness and the coping strategies in their sexual and para-sexual transactions, the boys of the clique succeed to manage on their own and negotiate emancipatory spaces in the Moroccan society. Caroline Dayer (2013) uses the same paradigm when she questions gender-related violence in a school context and the way it is endured by Swiss pupils. Her analysis of rejection mechanisms linked to sexual orientation or gender identity is based on the more general problematic of discrimination and on the idea of a heterosexist matrix. She shows how pupils deal with their sexual identity and face up to sexist or homophobic violence. Stigmas, stereotypes and prejudices generate a "minority stress" (Meyer, 2003). The person spends a considerable energy not to be the target of violence, which has physical ad psychological consequences. A more traumatising stigma as that it is not generally shared in the family, unlike the ethnic or religious stigmas. So the child has no respite and they have to make up permanently to leave an acceptable life role (Dayer, 2013: 135 – 136). The social transactions that the pupil then has to commit concern not only their peers but also, sometimes, teachers and educational authorities. So they take in a range of constraints and contingencies. The stakeholders are multiple – and few support them – and their minority status obliges them to compromise even more. If school will foster identity-building and a sense of belonging within community, and if identity construction is a transactional product, it seems that the conflicting cooperation is very much more difficult for sexual minorities and that their social acceptance is more a recurring question (Dayer, 2010 & 2011).

Transactions, sexuality and gender at a micro-level and in the presentation of self in everyday life

We saw previously that double transactions could be operated both in relationships with the others and in the internal dialogue of the person. Now we will focus on this second aspect of the transaction by focusing on the identity formation process of transsexual people. The trans-identity journey conforms to a logic of "restraining to metamorphosis" and can be deployed in six phases (Sironi, 2011). The paradigm of social transaction is useful: "to analyse the different biographic and inter-personal transaction (Dubar, 1994) working in each of the phase (…) [and] to determine the particularity of the different identity transitions from several people assigned to a gender at birth but having engaged or concluded a re-assignation in the claimed gender" (Carvajal Sánchez, 2013-a: 179) The transactions take place in serial. There are at the same time negotiations, compromises and conflicts between the actors but also doubts and contradictions within transsexuals and transgenders subjects themselves. This involves recognizing that gender claims are an obstacle course to overcome the resistances and convince stakeholders. Re-assignation is a long term process where, permanently and in a non-linear way, individuals have to negotiate with others and with themselves: What is my real-life identity? What is my received identity? What rate of estrogens or testosterone for which identity? What role of clothes in the process and when to change them? What surgical operations and when? What roles play the secondary sexual signs (Mustache, breast, hip, etc.) or the secondary identical signs (Nail polish, lipstick, make-up, masculine or feminine clothes, etc.)? With whom – man or woman – to be in couple? Which kind of couple, homosexual or heterosexual? When and how to change identity papers (passport, driving licence, etc.)? How to react in front of the looks or attitudes of the family, colleagues, administrations and others? Empirically, various transactional levels can be observed (Dayer, 2011 & 2013). The first level of transaction deploys to oneself (Dayer, 2013: 198 – 199). The progressiveness and the trial-and-error-deal in the sexual conversion are intrapersonal. It deals with the self-acceptation, the process of finding adequate vocabulary, the whom to say. The second level of transaction is interpersonal. It regards with the confrontation with others, the mobilization of retort or defense speeches, the fact of continuous managing with "evolutionary arms" and on unequal terms. The third level is societal (Dayer, 2013: 200 – 201). It concerns the capacity to be an actor exercising agency in their own lives, to interact with the various authorities of their close or distant circle of acquaintances. These three levels interact on each other. At every level the people compromise and negotiate, develop practical compromises, the purpose of which is the possibility of living and managing one's own identity. To conclude this review of social transaction approaches to gender and sexuality in a micro-level, we do not have to forget that social representations, norms, roles and "emotions are data which come into the transaction and at the same time modulate the normed social frame that governs the transaction" (Bernard, J., 2009: 79 – 80). And that, even if – sometimes – the transaction take place in a psycho-sociological level, it impacts on the community and the society, according to the fact that

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"the social action is thought and it develops itself in the interaction with the others" (Schurmans, 2003: 56).

Transactions without STP : a read again of works

Finally, some other works could be read again by mobilizing the social transaction approach. As an example, when Jacquelyne Luce (2013) studies lesbian, bi and queer women's experiences of thinking about and trying to become a parent, she looks at the contexts within which women's experience occurred and draw attention to issues such as "contracting" relationships to meet a donor or to "organize" insemination, mediating understandings of biology and genetics, and decision-making amidst various social, legal and medical developments. These different issues could be seen as interactions in a public arena where women have to develop their argumentation and face

contradictory speeches. A public scene where practical compromises must be brokered in an instant and whose validity is temporary, passing and resultant of the presence of different forces and stakeholders. The autonomy of the women is set against the autonomy of other social agents. The uncertainty of the situation is more important in a way that women have to compromise and that both side, have to compromise often and concerning questions that are varied. The work of Paola Tabet (2000 & 2004) could also usefully be reviewed by using the SPT. In a certain way, as Mister Jourdain made it in prose (Molière, 2013), she uses this paradigm without knowing it. It is commonly held that constraints connected to the reproductive capacities of the women determine their place in society and justify the sexual division of the work. Paola Tabet (2000) describes the social and historic construction of the "said-natural constraints" that assign their place to women. She shows the strength of the prejudices and the social or cultural representations with which women have to adapt and deal with in order to take their place in society. Besides, she questions the remuneration for sexuality which makes of a woman 'a whore' (Tabet, 2004). According to her, sexuality appears as an asymmetric exchange and not reciprocal between men and women. Not an exchange peer-to-peer, with one sexuality against the other, but as a male compensation for a feminine service that becomes consistently a benefit. So, she suggests a transaction on an unequal social market where the balance of power is against the women. A precarious compromise where the men take systematically advantage of their dominant situation. By exploring the asymmetric relation in the sexuality, by questioning the border between the wife and the prostitute, the author shows that women compromise in a range of constraints and negotiate, according to circumstances and strengths, the forms of their sexual commitment. An exchange – vice versa – but whose stakeholders are in unequal dispute, with possible cooperating alliances which impede the reciprocity; an exchange which, in fact, is widely similar to a social transaction.

Opportunities and interests of a transactional reading of the gender and the sex

After the presentation of STP in its theorical form and an outline of the major research studies that are based on it, conclusion provides an opportunity to answer the question in the title. If there is huge differences inside sex and gender studies – national, disciplinary, theoretical variations, in particular on the tradition of materialistic social criticism -, all of them agree on four aspects (Dortier, 2014: 32) : • The social construction of the phenomenon • Many relational process are organized around a binary relation man / woman • Relationships man / woman are marked by relationships of domination • The male domination is imbricated in other relations of power (economic, social, ethnic, etc.) Obviously, these four aspects start resonating with STP, which is built on pairs of inflexible oppositions, balance of power and domination, attention on the complexity of the social and on the interweaving of social phenomena (Blanc, M., 2009-b; Foucart et al., 2013; Gibout et al., 2009: 7 – 11; Rémy, 1994; Schurmans, 2014). Sexual and gender relationships could be seen as unstable and temporary transactional products that represent the livable social situation and authorize the resilience (Segal, 1986) without denying the conflictual nature of the society. If we consider that the relations of gender and sex are balance of power as well as part of the order of physical and/or symbolic violence, we can see that negotiations within the relational systems are investigated as a kind of resilience, i.e. a search for a new balance consecutive to a shock or a trauma (Cyrulnik, 2012). Considering these negotiations as social transactions is a way to show that resilience is not opposed to coping (Paulhan & Bourgeois, 1998). The adjustments are made in the hic-et-nunc but they are neither definitive nor linear. Individuals and groups compromise and their compromises are passing and changing throughout the situation, reflecting a state of the strengths in presence. So the social transactions give opportunities to analyze relationships of sex or gender as a kind of do-it-yourself, which is similar to the "savage mind" (Lévi-Strauss, 1962) as far as it tries to build an order with ill-assorted elements, but this order is ceaselessly made by temporary artefacts both to keep its nimbleness and its intelligence giving sense

and direction to the world surround and to keep life together possible. Already, some prospects and future developments could be imagined. Besides those studies already mentioned, other research areas in sexuality studies could benefit from using the STP. For example, the study of women or gay men who are engaged in "traditional male sports". I try to do this in a study of rugby women players (Gibout, 2015), where the STP helps to understand explicit and implicit transactions the sportswomen are engaged in. Also, the analysis of gay people engaged in heteronormative sport's team (Anderson, 2002; Anderson & Bullingham, 2013) could usefully use STP. How have sports' institutions managed to include or exclude gen

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der and sexual diversities? How have sports people managed to enter into "traditional clubs" and how do they manage themselves and their social position/identity within sexist and heteronormative culture? Among such a lot of questions, this topic shows how people and institutions have to enter into transactions with the other in order to stabilize a social position inside one "field of strengths and tensions". As another example, could be question the relationship between sexual consent, sexual literacy and sexual well-being, and the problems of sexual law and citizenship (Claes & Reynolds, 2013; Reynolds, 2010). How to build an identity from divergent positions? How, in the everyday life, to deal with the social pressures and prevailing views about gender identities and gender normativity? How to tinker a stable political identity from contradictory speeches according to the sexual identities? Are not stakeholders obliged to make compromises to make their life possible? Furthermore, STP goes a long way in respecting the agency of those who are being researched, while at the same time locating that research within the community being researched. It acknowledges the input of original works of experimental research, proposing that be re-read through STP, suggesting a paradigm that does not deny other approaches and tries to complete and improve them, keeping attention both on conflict and its practical resolution by stakeholders. Also, by inviting researchers to study quotidianity and to analyze commonplace activities, STP suggests a "macro sociology of everyday life in which anguish is established as a sociological concept" (Javeau, 1980: 31). An anxiety that is the translation of a social order to permanent compromise. In his experiences of ordinary life, everyone has to order their acts and argue their choices by making possible and regularly questioned compromises. STP invites researchers to think of the social acts of everyday life as so many factors organising necessary choices each of us has daily to face in order to keep one's face and to keep possible (and livable in?) society. To conclude, STP could be a real contribution to contemporary sexuality studies. It does not pretend to revolutionise the approach of sexuality as a social phenomenon. But, at the least, STP could improve contemporary sexuality studies by overcoming a sociology of the conflict and reconciling it with a sociology of the consensus, and by granting additional attention to everyday life in sociological understandings

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