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Backpedalling to stay ahead of the game: Discursive Institutional Work in the Deployment of Digital Terrestrial Television in France

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Abstract

The present paper studies the discursive institutional work of actors in their attempt to influence the institutions in place. Institutional change is often described as an interpretative struggle in which the actors argue about the meaning of reality. Discursive institutional work is based on discourse and enables actors to influence and act on the institutions in question. In this article, we use an analytical framework of interpretative struggles inspired by Hardy and Maguire (2008). The latter authors identify three forms of leverage used to shape the environment: i.e., justification, social relations and resources. Based on the case of the introduction of digital terrestrial television in France, we highlight the discursive institutional work developed by the actors, who configured justifications, social relations and resources in accordance with various scenarios. On a first level, the article contributes to neo-institutional theory by presenting a typology of four types of discursive institutional work that actors can use in order to shape institutions in their favour. This involves creating, countering, shifting and deflecting opportunities for institutional change. On a second level, we show that the actors adapt their discursive institutional work over the course of the process of institutional change. This leads us to formulate a second contribution which underscores the emergent nature of the actors' discursive institutional work and their capacity for creativity in the deployment of their strategies.

Key words: Discursive institutional work, Institutional change, Strategic interactions, Digital Terrestrial Television.

INTRODUCTION

Sociological neo-institutional theory (NIT) has enriched our conception of the organisational environment. In particular, it has shed light on the areas of social meaning, cognitive frameworks and networks that are used in the creation, dissemination and continuity of practices and organisational forms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Neo-institutionalism has introduced the idea that socio-cognitive processes can win over purely economic or rational considerations in the creation and dissemination of organisational forms and practices (Clemens & Cook, 1999; Scott, 1987; Venard, 2009) and in the construction of technologies (Munir, 2005).

This proposition is rich in meaning and implications with regard to the field of strategy. In effect, it reflects the degree to which actors' positions and competitive advantages are in part underpinned and supported by extra-economic dimensions of a symbolic, cultural and political nature. Actors who enjoy an advantage or a dominant position develop this advantage through their ability to redress the institutional context in their favour.

In order to create and maintain situations that are favourable to them, actors can manipulate and influence the meaning of reality, imposing their vision on other members of their field. The construction of institutions thus encompasses crucial strategic challenges. This construction is indeed often described as an 'institutional war', as opposed to a convergence of points of view and rhetoric passively endorsed and accepted by the actors (Hoffman, 1999; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). When actors with divergent interests attempt to influence institutions within the context of such institutional wars, interactions often take the form of an interpretative struggle (Hardy & Maguire, 2008 ; Maguire & Hardy, 2009) whereby the actors use the production of discourse and texts as strategic levers to influence the environment (Blanc & Huault, 2009; Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Hensmans, 2003; Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Munir, 2005 ; Munir & Phillips, 2005; Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004 ; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005).

However, studies on institutional wars and interpretative struggles have tended to focus on the outcomes of such institutional fights rather than an analysis of how the actions and reactions unfold in the creation and challenging of social meaning (Lawrence, Suddaby & Leca, 2009; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). This leaves a gap in our knowledge of the processes by which actors act, react and undergo changes in the production of discourse and texts in order to shape the institutions in their favour and to oppose other actors who argue against their vision of reality.

When involved in these interpretative struggles, actors may engage in interactive activities in order to influence their institutional context and the ensuing distribution of advantages. Thus, when an actor constructs an opportunity for institutional change through discourse which impacts on the whole field, it triggers reactions from a range of actors: some offer their support, while others attempt to thwart, shift or deflect the momentum of institutional change (Bartley, 2007; Trank & Washington, 2009; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010).

Despite its clearly significant development, the neo-institutional approach still offers no explanation to date for the spiralling process of actions and discursive reactions between actors caught up in an interpretative institutional struggle.

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We thus need to develop an understanding of the ways that actors may act and react in an interpretative struggle, and how they adapt their discursive strategic actions to influence the construction of institutions so as to maintain or develop their interests.

While the neo-institutional approach has tended to focus on the processes of constructing opportunities for change (Delbridge & Edwards, 2008; Munir, 2005), it should also be able to explain how these opportunities can be challenged by other actors, and how they emerge and evolve over time.

In the present study, we attempt to explain the strategic discursive actions adopted by actors to shape institutions, and the strategic actions and reactions that come into play. This perspective naturally leads us to the theoretical framework of institutional work defined as "the purposive action of individuals and organisations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions" (Lawrence & Suddaby 2006: 215). One of the advantages of the institutional work concept lies in its focus on intentional activities and on the efforts of a multitude of actors to shape the institutions. Institutional work is based to a large degree on discourse (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Maguire & Hardy, 2009). In order to fill the gaps in our knowledge, we conducted a longitudinal study on terrestrial television in France between 1996 and 2005. The arrival of digital terrestrial television (DTTV) in 1996 gave actors from outside the field, the government and public TV channels an opportunity to introduce change in order to challenge the domination of two private actors, TF1 and M6. The institutional change being championed was the creation of new channels by new actors, thereby opening up the field to new competition (Bourreau, 2005). The dominant actors, TF1 and M6, reacted by attempting to safeguard their advantages and their domination in the field. Our findings show that the actors used discourse in order to create, counter, shift and deflect the opportunities for institutional change. We present this typology of institutional work as strategic actions and reactions pursued as interpretative struggles. We also show that the discursive institutional work of the dominant actors, well-versed in defending their interests, evolved over time and took various forms: countering, shifting and deflecting opportunities.

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND DISCURSIVE INSTITUTIONAL WORK

According to Hardy and Maguire (2008), two key questions guide research on institutional change: (1) who can act on institutions and (2) what intervention strategies are used to shape institutions?

Neo- institutional theory now provides us with answers to the first question via the concept of institutional work which describes the practices of individuals and collective actors aiming to create, maintain or disrupt institutions (Lawrence, Suddaby & Leca, 2011: 52).

In addition to the question of who can act on institutions and under what conditions (Leca, Battilana & Boxenbaum, 2008), institutionally-oriented scholars have also investigated the intervention strategies used on institutions (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). Bolstered by its symbolic foothold, the neo-institutional approach has generally focused its research on the symbolic action

of interpreting the meaning of reality. Institutions change when the meaning of practices and social arrangements shifts and gradually wins over a large public that endorses the new social meaning and puts it into practice (Delacour & Leca, 2011).

Taking the linguistic turn that organisational theories have adopted for almost two decades, Phillips et al., (2004) paved the way to a stream of research that considers the production of discourse as a form of agency which is decisive for the dynamics of continuity and institutional change (Hardy & Maguire, 2008 ; Phillips & Malhotra, 2008).

Discursive institutional work and intervention strategies on the environment

Discourse analysis is based on a key notion that it is not the actions of the actors themselves which affect institutions, but rather the texts and discourse that describe these actions which catalyse the meaning creation and interpretation process. The actions thus trigger a production of texts that are interpreted by other actors and that influence the discourse and meaning of reality which underpins the institutions in the organisational field (Phillips et al., 2004).

Discursive institutional work is defined as the production, dissemination and consumption of texts that enable objects and concepts to be adopted as reality, and which create or transform the cognitive patterns through which the actors interpret and give meaning to the reality (Maguire & Hardy, 2009). A wide range of materials is used in such discursive analyses. They include archives, the written press (Zilber, 2006), images (Munir & Phillips, 2005) and academic books and publications (Hoffman, 1999; Maguire & Hardy, 2009). To have an impact on institutions, the text must leave its mark and, in turn, provide a basis for the creation of meaning and the interpretation of reality (Phillips et al., 2004). Discourse thus enables us to understand the endeavours of actors to determine and stabilise the meaning of reality (Phillips et al., 2004). Leonardi (2008) speaks about 'discursive closure' when the meaning given to a situation or social change becomes stable, objective and obvious.

Through the objects and concepts/ideas that it can introduce to reality (Fairclough, 1992), and the capacity to construct major issues (Maguire & Hardy, 2009) (global warming, stress at work), discourse leads actors to review otherwise obvious ideas and to adjust their interpretation of reality. Hardy and Maguire (2008) identify three levers in intervention strategies on the environment that make intensive use of discourse: (1) the construction of justifications (rationales), (2) the pre-emption and mobilisation of resources and (3) the establishment of social relations. The idea underpinning these three levers is that discursive institutional work uses combinations of justifications, resources and social relations in order to create different scenarios of how the reality is organised and how the field is structured. Following this, the actors developing the discursive institutional work try to induce collective adherence to the new field organisation (Benford & Snow, 2000 ; Creed et al. 2002 ; Hargadon & Douglas, 2001 ; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) or defection from the existing institutions (Delacour & Leca, 2011; Maguire & Hardy, 2009).

Justification plays a major role by giving the actors a basis of cognitive legitimacy for their institutionalisation projects (Creed, Scully & Austin, 2002). Above all, it involves influencing the attitude of actors with respect to the idea and the principle of changing the institutions in place. The extent to which actors agree

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to abandon existing practices and move towards new practices is certainly the most important aspect to manipulate in institutional change. As the cognitive cost of abandoning existing practices considered as obvious is large, this issue is incisive in the case of institutional change.

There are many ways that justification can be constructed in an institutionalisation process (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). Among others, we could mention the process of framing (Creed et al. 2002), theorisation (Greenwood, Suddaby & Hinings, 2002 ; Munir, 2005), narration (Zilber, 2007), translation (Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Zilber, 2006) and rhetoric (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). Despite their diversity, all of these approaches adopt discourse in the production of bases of legitimacy of institutions (legitimating account). The production of justification thus reflects the process by which the actors theorise, prioritise, rationalise to create a positive social meaning in order to persuade, or a negative one in order to dissuade other actors from adhering to change.

To be attainable and plausible, the institutional projects put forward must be based on the material resources needed for the institutions to operate, and must organise their distribution between the actors. Resources remain the least well defined aspect and the least well conceptualised in neo- institutional theory (Hardy & Maguire, 2008; Dorado, 2005). In effect, resources can come in several forms: symbolic, political or material. This paper looks at materiel resources in line with Leblebici, Salancik, Copay & King (1991), Hardy and Maguire (2008) and Levy and Scully (2007).

Institutional changes are possible when new material resources are liberated and new actors take them over or decide on the right of use (Leblebici et al., 1991). Zietsma and Lawrence (2010) showed that the first challenge in changes in the forest industry in Canada was access to forests as the key resource in the sector. Discourse is often used in the battle for resources (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). In effect, actors' advantages in a specific field lie in their ability to capture and pre-empt the resources to their advantage and to the detriment of their competitors (Huault, Liarte & Merigot, 2007). Discourse is also used to define the patterns of material resource allocation and the identity of the actors who can use them. Leblebici et al. (1991) clearly showed how the right to use a resource is subject to diverse interpretations and negotiation processes.

Apart from resources, justifications will only have an influence on institutions if they become collective and shared. Social relations are thus considered as the channels through which the justifications and social meaning are conveyed (Hoffman, 1999).

Social relations are an important dimension in institutional processes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). A new field organisation supposes that new social relations are established while others are removed. Delacour and Leca (2011) for example showed how the reorganisation of the field of art in France and the emergence of alternative coordination mechanisms and locations to the institution of the Salon, were accompanied by a defection of the State from the Salon, and the establishment of new social relations between dealers, collectors, critics and artists.

Social relations can also be envisaged with regard to a balance of power and of conflict when there is confrontation between two justifications which conflict with and contradict one another (Purdy & Gray, 2009). In this case, mobilising social relations enables the stakeholders to support or to challenge the different

projects that reshape the environment.

Social relations are established and dismantled in line with calls for mobilisation and strategies to win over actors (Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). Discourse plays a key role in this process, showing the different actors the advantages and power they can draw from support around an institutional change project.

The production of discursive institutional work and thus of the use of justifications, resources and social relations are influenced by the strategic interactions between actors.

Discursive institutional work and strategic interactions

Clemens and Cook (1999) called for the incorporation of a political perspective in neo- institutional theory, the underlying idea being to study continuity and institutional change as a conflictual social process of creation of meaning and an interpretative struggle (Creed et al., 2002 ; Maguire & Hardy, 2009).

Contrary to arguments regarding the diffusion of cultural schemas (Strang & Meyer, 1993) or their importation (Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2005), the interpretative struggle perspective considers the institutionalisation process as a battleground between several actors. Hoffman (1999) even speaks of an "institutional war." This idea also forms one of the bases of institutional work, calling for all of the actors involved in institutional continuity and change through their institutional work to be taken into consideration (Delbridge & Edwards, 2008; Lawrence et al., 2009 ; Reay & Hinings, 2009 ; Zilber, 2009). Thus, we find the following categories of actors implicated in institutional change: the incumbents who defend the *status quo*, the challengers who want to alter the institutions in place, and other actors who decide to support one or other of the players (Bartley, 2007; Creed et al., 2002; Hardy & Maguire 2010; Hensmans, 2003).

While the first attempts to take the strategy and agency of actors in institutional change into account, and focuses largely on the figure of the 'institutional entrepreneur hero' (Levy & Scully, 2007), taking the role of all the actors into account introduces a new challenge to understanding the dynamics of continuity and change in institutions.

The strategic view in institutional work is thus no longer based on the vision of just one actor and the capacity of the latter to detect and exploit opportunities for change, as in the concept of the institutional entrepreneur, but instead explores conflict, negotiation and confrontation between several actors (Bartley, 2007; Zilber, 2007), and the capacity to perpetually create, generate, reconstruct and challenge new opportunities to act on the environment (Delbridge & Edwards, 2007; 2008).

Delbridge and Edwards (2008) argue that innovation in super-yachts was the collective work of a designer, architects, artists, interior designers and avant-garde customers. The de-institutionalisation of old institutions and roles in the field were the outcome of what the authors call the institutional micro-processes. In fact, it is the succession of events and actions that end up overturning the previously recognised codes in the field. This is far from the institutional project shouldered and implemented by a heroic entrepreneur acting as a *deus ex machina* (Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007). In similar vein, Maguire and Hardy (2009) argued that following the publication of the book *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carlson, there was a clear increase in the number of academic papers and PhD

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theses on DDT.

The study by Maguire and Hardy (2009) is also interesting in that the authors suggest that the institutional work of actors changes when they are confronted with the actions of other actors. They thus consider defensive institutional work as a specific form of institutional maintenance, which assumes that the dominant actors respond to an attack by challengers. The authors highlight the strategies of de-problematisation, deconstruction of discourse and use of irony by the dominant actors in order to counter the disrupting activities conducted by the challengers.

Institutional work throw light on an aspect that is often neglected in institutional research, namely that of conflict and challenge (Bartley, 2007 ; Ben Slimane & Leca, 2010; Khan, Munir & Willmott, 2007 ; Zilber, 2007) which resonates in the field of strategy as a competitive struggle (Bensebaa, 2000) in which language and texts play a key role (Rindova, Barry & Ketchen, 2009).

The theory is a partial response to the way in which actors involved in an institutional change act and interact in order to shape the meaning of reality in their favour. The aim of our analysis is to understand the tactics used by actors to construct, deconstruct, counter or modify opportunities for change and action on institutions. Constructing an opportunity for change consists of creating the space and institutional conditions for the emergence of practices and alternative social forms (Delbridge & Edwards, 2008:302).

Only a fine grained analysis of the actions and discursive strategic interactions between the actors can help us to answer this question as it is through interactions between actors and the incremental accumulation of their institutional work that the conditions for successful change are created.

Accordingly, we raise the following research question:

How do actors use justification, resources and social relations in their discursive institutional work to shape and influence opportunities for institutional change to their advantage?

In order to answer our question, we studied the deployment processes of digital terrestrial television (DTTV) in France between 1996 and 2005.

CASE, DATA AND METHODS

The case of the terrestrial television field in France:

Most French people receive television by so-called terrestrial means. Terrestrial television is transmitted through radio waves, and the development of cable and satellite remains very limited in France (Bourreau, 2005; Brochand, 1994; 2006). In the history of French television, the terrestrial mode of broadcasting has been the most widespread both in terms of rate of penetration (received by 85% of households) and in economic terms as terrestrial television brings in €3.5 billion euros in advertising income. In addition to its quality as a conveyor of mass culture, French terrestrial television has been characterised by a concentrated competitive structure dominated by two private channels, TF1 and M6 (Bourreau, 2005), since 1987.

Digital technology first appeared in the 1990s via the cable and satellite, replacing analogue broadcasting. This mainly resulted in an increase in the number of channels and a considerable improvement in the quality of the

picture and sound. The digital wave then extended to the terrestrial mode thanks to DTTV, heralding a major change in the number of frequencies available and the number of channels that could be created in the spectrum.

DTTV did not impose an organisation model of the field and did not change its structure in line with pre-planned scenarios. It did, however, provide an opening for action and activated an institutional process whose primary goal was the use of frequencies released by DTTV.

The question of digital terrestrial television was first raised in France in 1996 (Lévrier report 1996). It was finally launched in March 2005. Our study covers the period of institutional turmoil between these two dates.

Data

Discourse analysis provided us with both a theoretical framework and a methodology (Phillips et al., 2004; Phillips & Malhotra, 2008). To conduct our study, we collected various texts produced on the topic of DTTV (table 1). The corpus of data included articles from the written press drawn from Factiva and Lexis Nexis databases over the period 1996-March 2005. The corpus also includes a public hearing with channels that were candidates for DTTV during the call for tenders organised by the CSA (*conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel*). During these public hearings, the applicants for licences (new players and existing channels) outlined their reasons for applying for channels on DTTV. The CSA also played a major regulatory role in the field of television. We thus collected articles posted on the official website as well as in its monthly newsletter, "*La Lettre du CSA.*"

We focused on two key moments of discursive production. First, the answers the different actors gave to the questions raised by the government in the White Paper on DTTV. This provided an interesting support document as, at the time, there was little echo of DTTV in the press. Second, we collected the minutes of a conference organised by the government audiovisual committee on 15 April 2004 that brought together the incumbent players, new players, politicians, electronics suppliers, and players from the world of cinema, cable TV and ADSL (*Asymetric Digital Subscribing Line*).

In order to facilitate and guide the progressive construction of the corpus of data and improve our field knowledge, we performed a series of 14 interviews over the period 2004-2007. The interviewees included top executives from private channels (NRJ, Pathé, M6), public channels (France Télévision), managers of professional associations (Access, DTTV for all), directors of industrial groups (Simavelec), journalists specialised in the French media (Les Echos), a former government deputy and member of the parliamentary audiovisual committee, the former President of the CSA who managed the DTTV roll-out, and a former member of the telecommunications regulations authority and former member of the government commission on DTTV.

Using their right to confidentiality, the interviewees requested that the interviews should not be recorded. The interviews were nonetheless useful as they enhanced our field knowledge and guided our search for data. However, we were unable to use any verbatim from the interviews in the textual analysis.

Methods

We opted for a longitudinal and processual study (Langley, 1999) in order to take into account both the complexity of the phenomenon under study, its

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evolution over time and the context in which it took place.

Discourse analysis was performed in two stages. The first stage consisted of drawing up a comprehensive database of discursive events (Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence, 2004; Maguire & Hardy, 2009). The database contains important events such as actions, statements, the publication of reports, meetings, encounters between actors, agreements or partnerships, etc. The events were classified in chronological order and the identity of the author of the text was specified for each event.

The database enabled us to develop a narrative account (Langley 1999, Van de Ven & Engleman, 2004) of the deployment process of DTTV, allowing us to understand the sequence of events and their interdependence.

The second stage of discourse analysis took the form of a thematic analysis (Fairclough, 1992; 2003) of the texts collected. We began by identifying the propositions in which the actors construct 'problematisations' or 'de-problematisations' (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Maguire & Hardy, 2009). Such problematisation consists of constructing or deconstructing the issues that are liable to lead the actors to question the meaning of reality (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005).

We identified 327 propositions which reveal an effort of problematisation on the part of the actors (see table 1).

Table 1. Sources and description of data

Sources of data	Description
Articles from the written press	Articles taken from the main French newspapers between 1996 and 2005. Around 4000 pages. Only the direct words of the actors were analysed. 122 propositions.
CSA public hearing	Transcribed public hearings organized by the CSA (length 30 min, between 12 and 15 pages) 10 public hearings analysed 66 propositions.
White Paper on DTTV.	Document published in 1999 which compiled the different positions and discourse of the actors with regard to DTTV. 180-page document, 69 participations. Document publié en 1999 qui compile les différentes positions et discours des acteurs par rapport à la TNT. Document de 180 pages, 69 participations. 73 propositions.
Conference organised at the French Senate on DTTV by the parliamentary committee	Conference that brought together all the DTTV actors (new players + incumbent players) with politicians.

For each proposition, we identified the author of the text, the topic or subject of the text, as well as the type of discourse employed (economic discourse, cultural, technological, nationalist, etc.) as recommended by Fairclough (1992) (see table 2).

The analysis of different types of discourse (also called order of discourse) is known in discourse analysis as intertextuality (Fairclough, 1992; Van Dijk, 1997). Intertextuality enables us to better understand how, in a context of institutional change, actors justify and theorise their actions by pulling together several ideas and concepts in one discourse.

In line with Suddaby and Greenwood (2005), the propositions were then grouped according to their authors and the position with regard to change, coding the actors as 'pro' when they defended DTTV, and 'anti' when they were against it.

We also grouped the propositions made during the process according to the groups of authors whose interests merge because they expressed their agreement or support at a given moment in the process or because they were united by specific ties such as belonging to an association, an interest group or a forum.

We then took the propositions thus gathered, aggregated them according to their authors, and analysed the overall coherence in order to identify the episodes in which actors create a meaning and try to stabilise it or, on the contrary, deconstruct a meaning and try to hinder its stabilisation.

Once the propositions were aggregated according to the authors who defended the same justification and adhered to the same position with regard to the change, we analysed and interpreted the patterns of resource definition and their distribution in the field according to each period.

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Table 2. Thematic analysis of the propositions

Date	Proposition	Auteur	Attitude par rapport à la TNT	Thèmes et objets discursifs	Types de discours	Theorisation process and sense produced
November 1999	It is essential not to suddenly throw this market off balance but rather to strengthen the French champions that remain small organisations compared to their international competitors.	Patrick Le Lay	Pro DTTV	The existing actors The international competition	Economic Nationalist	Construction of problem on the fragility of existing actors.
17 June 2002	Don't count on me this morning to join the group of dream merchants, friendly pipe players who claim to rapidly reach the 3%, 4%, 5% of audience share in two or three years, with a low cost programme and banal content. It's not the truth!	Etienne Mougeotte, Director of Programmes at TF1	Anti TNT	New players Economic viability	Economic	Construction of problem on the incapacity of new DTTV players to be economically viable
26 June 2002	Trying to weaken the national groups already in place in the television means putting French creation at risk ….It's the big groups that finance French production and not the hard-pressed specialist channels…	Patrick Le Lay, CEO of TF1.	Anti TNT	The dominant actors The new players The creation industry	Economic	Association and creation of a sense of dependence between the financial health of the dominant actors and the creative industry.
27 June 2002	Today, what have we really got as television? Two private channels and, on the other side, an army of beggars: the producers. These two private channels made 1.2 billion euros in profit in the last two years.	A B Group, New player	Pro TNT	The dominant actors, TF1 and M6.	Political discourse	Theorisation ad hominem. The position of private actors in terrestrial television is hegemonic.
26 September 2003	All the European countries are changing to digital. It's an inevitable development	Jean-Jacques Aillagon, Minister of Culture	Pro TNT	The new players	Technologique	Comparison and generalisation. DTTV is a general and unavoidable evolution
23 July 2004	High definition, like mobility, is a service that will give DTTV its true added value	TF1 and M6 (joint declaration)	Pro DTTV	The existing actors The international competition	Economic Nationalist	Association between DTTV, high definition and the new services. Deconstruction of the existing sense of justification of DTTV (number of channels + free of charge) and reconstruction of a new sense (quality + new services)
31 March 2005	The whole population will be able to access new programmes, a privilege previously reserved for an elite who had the financial resources	Philippe Labro, Head of Direct8 (Bolloré group, new player)	Pro TNT	The French -Number of channels	Social discourse on social inequality with regard to the television	Association between DTTV, high definition and the new services. Deconstruction of the existing sense of justification of DTTV (number of channels + free of charge) and reconstruction of a new sense (quality + new services)

During the case study, we noted changes in position regarding DTTV by some actors. In effect, we identified areas of discursive tipping points that distinguished episodes of interaction between the actors who defended the change and those who tried to oppose or alter it.

FINDINGS

We organised the account of the evolving institutional war over DTTV in France into three episodes.

The first episode: The birth of DTTV: 1996-2001
Context and events
Several categories of actors took part in the debate on the introduction of DTTV, which involved 69 actors in all, including editors of terrestrial channels, editors of cable channels, editors of local channels, players from associations and professional syndicates, actors in broadcasting and telecommunications.
DTTV gave rise to a debate on how to allocate the frequencies that could be released in the spectrum and, above all, to whom. During this first episode, three solutions were put forward, thereby dividing the actors from the field, and the newcomers and actors in adjacent fields (cinema, music, cable) into three groups. Each group constructed a scenario of how the field would be organised via discursive institutional work using justifications, and configuring the resources (frequencies in the spectrum) and the social ties between the actors.

The discursive institutional work of the challengers
The arrival of DTTV gave actors from outside the field, newcomers like NRJ, Pathé and AB Group, an opportunity to destabilise the competitive balance by constructing and supporting a scenario to launch DTTV, which would allow them to appropriate the frequencies that could be freed up and so launch new channels.

Justification. The scenario was justified by several discursive constructions which led to a positive meaning around DTTV. The challengers presented the change to DTTV as a natural, inevitable, necessary and welcome technological evolution. The argument was that digital technology was becoming mainstream and touched on several general public sectors, including the media and entertainment like music, video and images. DTTV was considered to fit into the natural and inevitable flow of the trend towards a generalisation of digital media. This justification was also based on the development of a meaning of the specificity of this change and its novelty with regard to existing offers.

Resources. While the scenario proposed by the new players and partisans of DTTV defended the creation of new channels by new players, it needed to release and pre-empt the resources required and establish new ways of how they could be shared and allocated in favour of the newcomers.
In order to free up resources, two registers were adopted in the discursive strategy. The first was the problematisation of scarcity of resources identified by Jean-Denis Bredin in 1985. Prior to the arrival of DTTV, this scarcity had

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not been called into question, contributing to the domination in the sector by TF1 and M6. DTTV nevertheless led to a problematisation of the scarcity of resources that challenged the previously accepted scenario. The lack of resources directly impacted on the number of channels and programmes that could be broadcast on television.

The second institutional discursive register on resources was the strategy of pre-emption of resources that could be released by DTTV for new players and the legitimacy of their right as recipients. In effect, the release of resources would not be sufficient if they were not pre-empted by the newcomers, thereby enabling them to launch new channels. The argument used was that the newcomers could provide more cultural diversity and challenge the domination of TF1 and M6. According to the newcomers, launching new channels would help to end the traditional monopoly of TF1 and M6, introducing a meaning of freedom to the field as the words of Claude Berda, manager of a new pretender to a licence for a channel on DTTV, illustrate.

> *Digital television represents a truly great opportunity for independent producers, enabling them to break the monopoly of the leading groups not only in terrestrial television but also in cable and satellite.*[1]

Social relations. This scenario was mainly defended by a group of new players (NRJ, Pathé, Groupe, AB, Lagardère). Other actors rallied around the cause, like producers of electronics equipment and some actors from the telecommunications sector interested in the potential new services that could be launched thanks to DTTV. The call for support was widespread with, as a federating agent, the positive meaning produced around DTTV as a natural and inevitable technological evolution, creating opportunities for electronics equipment, programmes and the exploitation of new frequencies.

The discursive institutional work of the dominant actors (TF1 and M6, Canal plus and the public service)

The existing actors in the field included the two dominant private actors, TF1 and M6, the only paying channel, Canal+ and the public service. These actors welcomed DTTV at first. They also developed an opportunity for institutional change in reaction to the arrival of DTTV. On the other hand, the scenario they constructed through their discursive institutional work opposed the scenario defended and legitimised by the newcomers.

Justification. For the incumbent players, DTTV represented a welcome and desirable, although unnecessary, change, subject to the condition that it did not destabilise the competitive balance in the field and would give only them an opportunity to create new channels.

> *Digital terrestrial TV should be used first and foremost as a new and complementary means of distribution.*[2]

The main idea behind this justification for change lay in the need to adapt to the proposed changes to the field's existing context in order to mitigate the impression of disruption. In contrast to the justifications put forward by the challengers and partisans of DTTV for an exogenous and natural technological

1. Claude Berda, The DTTV White paper (1999).

2. TF1, 1999, the DDTV White Paper

evolution, the existing actors instead tried to find logical arguments for change within the field itself, describing DTTV as an opportunity to consolidate what already existed. The changeover to DTTV was thus largely justified to attenuate its radical character and its specificity, as DTTV was described as complimentary to satellite and cable. At the heart of this justification lay a sense of idealisation of the existing situation that should not be disturbed but only improved and consolidated.

Resources. The construction of the opportunity for change and the substitution of analogue transmission by DTTV was conditioned by a non-destabilisation of the competitive balance and, according to TF1 (White Paper 1999), its reinforcement.

Thus, the existing actors wanted the resources released by DTTV to be allocated exclusively to them so that each of them could create more channels. They wanted the frequencies freed up to be allocated by blocks of six channels (called multiplex). They would thus share the six blocks released by DTTV, enabling them to recover their old channels and to launch new ones.

3. TF1, 1999, the DDTV White Paper

> *Pour pouvoir maintenir le niveau de leur influence et améliorer la qualité de leur offre, France Télévision doit disposer d'au moins deux multiplexes (12 chaînes) complets attribués de manière indivisible.*[3]

4. Patrick Le Lay, 1999, the DTTV White Paper

In order to pre-empt the resources released, the incumbent players developed problematisations. The most important was the fragility of the incumbent players' situation and the need to protect them with regard to their status as *'national champions'* [4]. They also raised the issue of foreign competition in the media. By permitting the existing actors, TF1, M6, Canal+ and the public service to create six new channels each, they would be able to consolidate their position and French interests in the face of foreign competition. This problematisation thus used nationalist discourse (interests of the nation) that promoted the existing actors as guarantors of the general interest.

Social relations. This change scenario called for and federated the interests of existing actors that had worked on and defended a scenario of replacement of analogue transmission by DTTV, but which did not agree with the launch of new channels by new players. The actors thus joined forces around a single project, that of the deployment of DTTV and, above all, the preservation of the competitive balance and the boundaries in the field.

The discursive institutional work of actors from the cinema and cable operators
This was the third position taken with regard to DTTV during this episode. Associations of cinema producers and cable operators defended the *status quo*, even challenging the principle of replacing analogue television by DTTV and the plan to release frequencies.

Justification. The perspective of launching DTTV and creating new channels via DTTV was unanimously rejected by these actors. The change was theorized as unwelcome and unnecessary as it destabilised the *status quo*. This justification thus induced a negative meaning regarding the change.

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Resources. This scenario of defence of the *status quo* was based on the principle of the non release of new frequencies. The central problematisation behind this attempt to block the release of new resources consisted of constructing meaning that highlighted the risk of dilution and fragmentation of the audience, which would be prejudicial to film funding.

> *We are afraid that digital terrestrial broadcasting will only worsen the situation of*
> *market fragmentation and of the related resources.[5]*

The new digital terrestrial channels, whether created by new players or by the traditional actors, were thus considered as a threat.

Social relations. This position of refusal to change and thus to keep the *status quo* became a rallying call for actors whose interests would be put at risk by an increase in the number of terrestrial channels. The first hard core opponents fiercely opposed to the project to launch DTTV were players in the cinema and cable operators.

The second episode: the head-on clash: 2001-2004
Context and events
In March 2001, date of publication of the audiovisual law, the government officially began to work on DTTV and sent out a call to tender in order to allocate the frequencies by channel rather than by blocks of channels. This decision went against the wishes of TF1, M6, Canal+ and the public service in the DTTV launch who wanted exclusive access to all the frequencies released. This event led to a direct shift in the discursive institutional work of the dominant TF1 and M6 actors. The second key event in this episode consisted of the emergence of ADSL (*Asymetric Digital Subscribing Line*) as a new technology for distributing TV channels via the phone network. In collaboration with actors from outside the sector, TF1 promoted ADSL as a substitute for DTTV.

The institutional work of the new players and promoters of DTTV
Justification. The new players, the government, the CSA, the suppliers and the public service presented DTTV as a natural and necessary evolution from analogue to digital transmission as it was specific and offered real added value in the form of a wider choice of free channels.
Following the introduction of ADSL in 2002, the promoters of DTTV defended their position by challenging the paying model, promoted by TF1, on which this supposed alternative to DTTV would be built. It worked to deconstruct the specificity and originality of ADSL by placing it alongside existing cable and satellite systems.
Thus, according to the challengers, this alternative technology was unwelcome and inappropriate as it did not provide a solution to the issue of social inequality with regard to the television service currently in place in France. ADSL was presented as a paying service with limited geographic coverage, as illustrated by the words of the CEO of NRJ:

> *ADSL is limited to urban areas and requires a subscription. It cannot substitute*
> *the terrestrial television reception of around fifteen channels available free of*
> *charge on DTTV. NRJ wants the programme distributors to have to transmit the*

6. Marc Pallain: La Tribune, 3April 2003.

free channels available on DTTV on ADSL.[6]

ADSL was thus rejected as such a change was considered inappropriate since it was not in line with the values and challenges in the field as constructed by the challengers.

Resources. The supporters of DTTV also developed a new problematisation in order to legitimise the nature of DTTV and the creation of new channels by the new players. The aim here was to pre-empt the resources available following the changeover in order to reuse them to launch new channels.

The first problematisation developed by these actors was the scarcity of terrestrial television channels in France and the subsequent question of inequality between French people with respect to TV.

France is the country where the majority of citizens receive the smallest number of free television channels. Terrestrial television is thus associated with having very few channels while, on the contrary, other modes such as satellite and cable offer a large number of channels to a small number of French people for a subscription fee. In effect, paying television has had the least success in France as over 60% of French people are reticent about paying for television channels.

It was this situation of lack of channels for the majority of French people, and the domination of TF1 and M6, that the promoters of DTTV raised as an issue. Thus, the prevailing situation in the field of terrestrial television was presented as generating social inequality between French people, raising issues of democracy and access to culture.

7. Jean Pierre Elkabach, Chairman of the Public Senate, new player in DTTV (News Press, 25 March 2002).

8. Philippe Labro in a public hearing for the channel Direct 8, 19/06 /2002

This new form of broadcasting is a crucial advance for our country which advocates freedom of communication and equal access to channels of general interest for all citizens.[7]

It's been fifteen, twenty or maybe thirty years that they've been given [French citizens] a certain type of programme, a certain tone, a certain style, a certain colour, a certain music and well, today, they're almost certainly looking for something else. As the philosopher Alain said: "The spice of the individual is his refusal to bleat according to the tone and the beat."[8]

Two central issues were underscored in this problematisation: the quantity and the non-paying nature of the new channels.

The newcomers also placed TF1 and M6 at the heart of their discursive institutional work. This strategy took two different forms. The first consisted of developing a negative impression and demonizing the domination of TF1 and M6 using rhetoric based on justice. In parallel, the new players presented themselves as the standard bearers of freedom and emancipation.

9. Gérôme Seydoux; public hearing in front of the CSA, 27/06/2002

Today, what have we really got as television? Two private channels and, on the other side, an army of beggars: the producers. These two private channels made 1.2 billion euros in profit in the last two years.[9]

This impression is supported by a discursive strategy of the ad hominem type that aims to undermine the credibility of TF1 and M6 and to call their intentions into question.

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> *Enfin, nous sommes bien placés pour reconnaître dans les propos de Cassandre sur la TNT, les éternelles thèses des opérateurs historiques confrontés à l'arrivée d'une nouvelle concurrence.* [10]

Social relations. Following the government's decision to organise DTTV so as to open up to new competitors, support and opposition in the field began to shift. The public service thus joined the ranks of DTTV promoters to open it up to the competition. The new players, the public service and the supplier, Netgem, even created an association to promote DTTV and defend it in the face of the two private channels. This association gave itself the symbolic name of "*TNT pour tous*" (DTTV for all).

The discursive institutional work of the dominant actors, TF1 and M6
Following the government's decision to introduce a call to tender for the launch of 24 channels, TF1 and M6 began to develop institutional work to defend the *status quo* and to counter the opportunity created by the challengers.

Justification. For the actors who opposed DTTV, now comprising the two private channels, TF1 and M6, actors from the world of cinema and cable operators, the change was described as unnecessary, unattainable and dangerous. They also constructed arguments for an alternative to DTTV, namely, ADSL, theorised and presented as better than DTTV. Effectively, for the private channels, DTTV gave the field nothing new as high quality, digital multi-channel offers already existed on cable and satellite.

> *Digital terrestrial is not technological or cultural progress but a distribution network of programmes in addition to cable and satellite that the government is trying to impose and control.* [11]

This was a de-problematisation of the sense constructed by the supporters of change who theorised the change to DTTV as a specific, natural and inevitable evolution. Thanks to this discursive counter production, the change was theorised as unnecessary, as TF1 and M6 deconstructed the arguments of DTTV's specificity and the technological advance it offered that would give the French more channels.
They also built up a meaning of danger and possible technical difficulties that DTTV would be subject to, according to several scenarios.
Firstly, TF1 and M6 used a discursive strategy with an analogy between DTTV and previous technological failures in the field's history such as the 'Cable Plan' (Perrani 1996, Bourreau 2005) and the TDF 1 and TDF 2 satellites.
The comparison developed by the two private channels between DTTV and the cable plan, together with the failure of TDF1 and TDF2, created the impression that government-led projects, as was the case for DTTV, were bound to fail due to state involvement and the little room for manoeuvre left for private actors. In the same register, the dominant actors' discursive work incorporated the British and Spanish experiences. The UK and Spain had launched DTTV respectively in 1998 and in 2000, and both experiments had ended in commercial and technical failure.

12. Patrick Le Lay, Les Echos, 18 June 2002

[We should] look at the example of the failures that occurred in Europe (ITV in the UK, Quiero TV in Spain): it's crucial to wait. [12]

Resources. The institutional work conducted by TF1 and M6 consisted of obstructing change by producing a negative meaning and also guiding change with the creation of new channels by new actors from outside the field thanks to ADSL.

The discursive institutional work pertaining to the resources involved constructing technical difficulties inherent in the potential release of such resources.

TF1 and M6 attempted to bring the debate on DTTV back to a technical level. This meant focusing the counter-discourse on topics of a technical and economic nature such as the reorganisation of frequencies, geographic coverage and the financial health of the newcomers, all subjects that were absent from the challengers' discourse.

According to TF1 and M6, one of the reasons why DTTV was bound to fail lay in the cumbersome nature, the difficulty and the cost of reorganising the frequencies necessary for the spectrum's planning schedule before the launch of DTTV.

The second technical issue introduced by TF1 and M6 was the problem of coverage by DTTV. This technical argument was based on the impossibility to release resources to some places like at the foot of mountains or the ground floor of blocks of flats in town. [13]

13. Nicolas de Tavernost, CEO of M6, citing a technical report by the ANFR in June 2002

In effect, DTTV's lack of coverage could mean that large parts of the country would be unable to receive the service. The idea of a new television available for all was thus tempered and criticised.

14. Patrick Le Lay, Les Echos, 18 June 2002

Contrary to *the generous idea of the legislator, DTTV will be available "at best to 70% of the country." It will not be free "as, apart from the main general interest channels, the other free channels could only come from the public service, and so would be paid for by the taxpayer. A strange notion of 'free',*[14]

15. Patrick Le Lay, Les Echos, 28 March 2003

DTTV is not a system that offers freedom. We've been speaking about it for three years and haven't yet begun the experiments. It will simply remove the TV reception of households that get it now. [15]

The private channels questioned the financial and technical capacity of the newcomers to create and develop channels on terrestrial televisions.

16. Etienne Mougeotte, public hearing in front of the CSA, June2002.

We all know, but don't count on me this morning to join the group of dream merchants, friendly pipe players who claim to rapidly reach the 3%, 4%, 5% of audience share in two or three years, with a low cost programme and banal content. It's not the truth! [16]

TF1 and M6 also used irony to develop the sense of the newcomers' inability to create viable terrestrial channels.

17. Patrick Le Lay, public hearing in front of the CSA, June 2002.

Believing that we will organise competition with them by bringing new operators to the market is like wanting to add competitors to Air France by calling on a producer of gliders to launch a project in Issy les Moulineaux (a suburb of Paris).[17]

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The defensive work of obstructing institutional change was underpinned by a second strategy which consisted of shifting change to another terrain by creating an opportunity for an alternative from outside the field. This manoeuvre would perpetuate the scarcity of resources in the field.

In line with its technological and economic discourse and in the framework of its strategy to deconstruct the meaning of social and cultural progress of DTTV, TF1 promoted ADSL in 2002 as a technically superior alternative to DTTV. Thus, the dominant actors attempted to find new resources in response to the low number of channels elsewhere than through the spectrum of terrestrial frequencies.

> *The future is more about TV on Internet once high speed broadband develops greater penetration in France.* [18]
> *They [ADSL] will put DTTV alongside the accessories.* [19]

18. Patrick Le Lay, Les Echos, 18 June 2002

19. Patrick Le Lay, Strategie, 7/03/2003

Thus, TF1 began experiments and trials in collaboration with Alcatel in order to test the feasibility of a new technology that would enable television to be transmitted via the Internet. ADSL was presented as a substitute for DTTV which, according to the technological and economic discourse used by TF1 and M6, would be technically superior and easier to introduce. This new mode of transmission effectively offered more options in terms of quantity and services for viewers (on-tap, pay-per-view video). The launch of ADSL offered new resources from outside the field of terrestrial television that could, according to TF1 and M6, be used to launch new channels while maintaining the scarcity of frequencies.

Social relations. During this period, the two private channels, film production associations and cable operators worked to counter the institutional change. A special interest group was created between these different actors in order to counter DTTV in response to the association '*DTTV pour tous*'. ADSL also rallied support from the government, like Francis Mer, at the time Minister of the Economy, who supported the new project.

The introduction of ADSL into the debate on DTTV also changed the social landscape, as TF1 looked for partners from outside the field like Alcatel and Thomson, as well as telecommunications operators. TF1 also launched a joint-venture with the Robert Louis Dreyfus group.

The third episode: Diversion: 2004-2005
Context and events

In February 2004, to general surprise and a few months before the effective launch of DTTV scheduled for 2005, TF1 and M6 announced their support for DTTV, but on condition it was launched with High Definition quality. In reality, this was an attempt at diversion that met the challenge of disruptive change by another change within their field, promoting their interests to the detriment of the newcomers. Hence, the third stage of the institutional war began.

In September 2003, the ETSI (European Telecommunications Standards Institute) approved the new specifications of the MPEG4 compression technology. These new specifications enabled a larger volume of data (contained in images and sound) to be compressed and coded with a minimum of resources (bandwidth) in comparison to the earlier MPEG2 technology.

TF1 and M6 jumped on this event to develop a new opportunity for institutional change that consisted of abandoning the *status quo* (analogue television) and introducing High Definition DTTV.

The discursive institutional work of the dominant TF1 and M6 actors

Justification. TF1 and M6 theorised DTTV in High Definition (HDTV) quality, a natural and welcome evolution in response to the disruptive change of DTTV in standard quality. The two actors based their new institutional deflection work on the problematisation of France's technological delay in the media, and underscored the issue of industrial excellence and technological progress linked to HDTV. Thanks to the comparisons made with other countries, the dominant actors effectively showed that the migration and generalisation of HDTV was the new, industrially excellent solution.

20. Sylvain Audigier, Technical Director of TF1, Stratégie, 27/05/2004

> *Instead of being the last in the class to launch DTTV in MPEG-2, it would be better to be the first to launch it in MPEG-4. [20]*

21. Patrick Le Lay, La Tribune, 3/05/2004

> *Is it really a national issue to set in motion an immense machine to favour the introduction of three 'miserable' free channels? [21]*

This theorisation constructed the meaning of a major technological advance around High Definition DTTV, while enabling them to construct a negative meaning of obsolescence around the standard definition and the MPEG2 standard. The use of metaphors allowed them, for instance, to highlight the technological gap between the two standards.

22. Nicolas de Tavernost, AFP, 3/11/2004

> *We get in a steam train because we're offered a steam train, when we could electrify the line. In digital television, the MPEG4 standard is what the flat screen is to the cathode tube for TV sets compared to the MPEG2 standard. [22]*

While the change to DTTV had been presented as natural and inevitable, the change towards HDTV was theorised as a major and radical advance, developed in the sense of industrial excellence and greatness.

Resources. The institutional diversion work performed by TF1 and M6 was based on a new definition of the quantity of resources in the field, and established new patterns in their allocation. Being in favour of change, namely, the launch of DTTV, the existing actors agreed to liberate new frequencies in the field. However, they reconstructed the scarcity of resources principle by defending their allocation to a new use that would require an increase in the amount of resources needed for their activity.
In effect, the change put forward by TF1 and M6 reduced the number of channels that could be created via terrestrial mode by half, closing the doors to newcomers (see the CSA report, 2004).

23. Francis Beck, adviser to the CSA, AFP, 9/06/2004

> *If DTTV is launched with this standard "it is not the 30 authorised channels that will benefit from HDTV but the traditional channels. We will go against the aims of the legislators" to extend the offer[23]*

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> *HDTV requires new and costly TV sets. That doesn't mean turning our backs on it, but if we use all the resources for HDTV, we can't have any new channels.* [24]

The discursive institutional work developed by TF1 and M6 also matched the French people's need for better quality programmes and a de-problematisation of the argument of the low number of channels used by the challengers. This problematisation fits into the logic of providing more resources to increase the quality of channels and not their quantity.

For TF1, the present habits and practices of French people justified higher quality, as digital technology was becoming mainstream.

> *They [the viewers] want the television of tomorrow. Not new channels, there are already too many on cable and satellite. However, they need high definition pictures, as is already the case in Korea, Japan and the United States. And they need to get pictures on their mobile phones and electronic organisers. Digital terrestrial television will only permit this nomadism if the MPEG-4 standard, which will be approved by September, is adopted. Because of absurd pig-headedness, and because we absolutely have to stay on schedule, we're going to launch DTTV with MPEG-2, an obsolete standard at the end of its lifespan, which can't evolve any more and will deprive French viewers of these technologies.* [25]

Social relations. The institutional work led by TF1 and M6 attracted new support. In effect, the Minister of the Economy took up the cause for the HDTV scheme.

Thus, TF1 was behind the creation of HD Forum, a structure that included actors from industry, content and programme producers, and telecom operators. Actors from the world of cinema also supported the project, arguing that HD quality films would be beneficial to the industry.

The government asked for two reports from experts on the issues involved in the change of standard and the launch of HDTV. The first report submitted by the CGTI (general council of information technologies) was overtly favourable to the new standard and highlighted the support that other actors like Thomson were ready to give in the production of new adaptors. The second report was drawn up by a government deputy. The report did not come down clearly in favour of HDTV but put forward a hybrid scenario combining both the MPEG2 and the MPEG4 standard.

The discursive institutional work of the new players and promoters of DTTV

Justification. In response to this opportunity for change constructed and theorised by the two private channels, the newcomers' challenge was now to defend DTTV and MPEG2. Their discursive work consisted of idealising DTTV with the MPEG2 standard as the only standard that would allow enough new channels to be launched on schedule.

> *Only the MPEG2 standard, a universal, mature standard, developed by all the countries that have launched DTTV, complies with the choice of the legislator in 2000 and in 2004, in other words, a clear and independent line, consistently supported by the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA)* [26]

24. Dominique Baudis, President of the CSA, Le Monde, 10/06/2002

25. Letter to the Prime Minister signed by three new players (NRJ, AB, Bolloré), 19/10/2004

26. Patrick Le Lay La Tribune 03/05/2004

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The new players reiterated their problematisation of social inequality between the French with regard to terrestrial television, and the problem of the lack of choice of channels. This problematisation led them to produce counter-texts in order to prove that the change proposed by TF1 and M6, in other words HDTV, would not resolve the problems in the field. Thus, by introducing a social discourse, they constructed a negative social meaning around HDTV as being a change for the wealthy in France since it reduced the number of free channels and required costly investment in new screens.

27. CSA 19/10/2004, 'Quelle norme pour quel modèle ?' report ('what standard for what model')

The MPEG 4–HD adaptor is to be released on the market at a cost of over €100. This high cost is obviously nothing for households that decide to buy wide-screen HD TVs. But they are the minority. However, all the other households will have to get themselves an adaptor at the same price in order to get the same programmes, but in standard definition. For them, the HD model is a disadvantage: 12 channels for €100 instead of 15 channels for €50. Such a scheme would be like getting HD reception in wealthy households subsidised by less well-off viewers who don't have enough buying power to get access to it. [27]

At the same time, for the defenders of DTTV, the intentions of TF1 and M6 remained the same, in other words, they wanted to defend their patch and to bar the way to new competition.

28. Marc Pallain, MD of NRJ, Les Echos, 12/07/2004

This proposal has just been introduced to disrupt the CSA schedule (...) or even to change the composition of multiplexes in a way that is more favourable to TF1 and M6. [28]

The *ad hominem* theorisation played a large part in the creation of this meaning.

Resources. To counter the strategy to resuscitate the principle of scarcity, the new players and the DTTV defenders attempted to protect the release of resources to increase the number of channels, insisting on the need to optimise management of the spectrum and a fair allocation that would benefit the newcomers. Thus, the redeployment of resources released to enhance the quality of programmes rather than their quantity was depicted as technically difficult to achieve. The problematisation developed around the delay that the launch of HDTV would cause. At the time, MPEG4-compatible adaptors were not yet available on the market and there was a crucial lack of the equipment required to produce programmes in HD.

Social relations. The HDTV project did not change the social ties and social relations in the group of DTTV promoters, even if, at top government level, there was disagreement between the Minister of Trade and Industry who supported HDTV and the Minister of Culture who wanted to launch DTTV. The new players and the public service, along with the CSA, continued their offensive to introduce DTTV and extend the competition. The NRJ group, Lagardère Media, the public service, Netgem, Bolloré, Pathé and AB group continued to run the association "*TNT pour tous*" which managed to federate antenna installers, property management firms, the major retail chains and installers around the project through the publication of texts.

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DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our study was guided by the premise that research on interpretative struggles and institutional wars did not take sufficient note of the actions and strategic reactions between the actors involved in a disputed institutional change.

The findings, drawn from a case study on the deployment of DTTV in France between 1996 and 2005, lead us to propose and discuss two contributions to neo- institutional theory in the section that follows. The first contribution consists of a typology of institutional work developed by actors caught up in an interpretative struggle. The second contribution deals with embedded agency (Seo & Creed, 2002).

Contribution to an interactionist view of discursive institutional work

Our study on the strategic interactions between actors in a disputed institutional change gave rise to a typology of four forms of discursive institutional work linked to the concept of opportunity for institutional change which involves creating, countering, shifting and deflecting opportunities for institutional change (table 3).

Table 3. Typology of discursive institutional work from a strategic interaction perspective

	Justifications	Resources	Social relations	Actors and contexts of use
Creating opportunities	Theorisation of change as welcome, inevitable and a natural evolution. Presenting the change as specific and original	Problematisation of the scarcity of resources Pre-empting the right to use resources	Mobilisation of actors and call for support from powerful actors. Creation of coordination organisations	Challengers, outsiders wishing to enter the field and destabilising the competitive positions of dominant actors.
Countering opportunities	Theorisation of change as dangerous, unwelcome and unnecessary De-specifying the change by describing it as banal Idealisation of the status quo	De-problematisation of the scarcity of resources. Constructing the technical impossibility of change	Mobilisation of internal support Strengthening the identity of existing actors	Dominant actors wishing to safeguard the status quo and countering the challengers' disrupting work.
Shifting opportunities	Theorisation of an alternative form of change from outside the field. Presenting the alternative change as welcome and better able to resolve the problematisation raised by the challengers	De-problematisation of the scarcity of resources in the field. Pre-empting other resources from outside the field.	Mobilisation of support of social relations from inside the field Mobilisation of support from outside the field	Dominant actors who wish to safeguard the status quo and challenge the work of destabilisation by the challengers.
Deflecting opportunities	Theorisation of a change within the field as welcome. Theorisation of the extraordinary nature of change, not as a natural evolution but as an important advance to the natural and incremental evolution of things. Giving meaning to a daring gamble into the future.	Problematisation of the scarcity of resources. Pre-empting the right of use of resources to exclude challengers.	Mobilisation of social relations from inside the field Mobilisation of social relations from outside the field	Dominant actors who abandon the defence of the status quo and construct an institutional change that strengthens their interests to the detriment of the challengers.

Creating opportunities for change

Creating opportunities for change involves developing the conditions required for the establishment of institutional change (Delbridge & Edwards, 2008).

In contrast to prior research where only the production of justification was investigated, our study underscores the role of resources and social relations. While existing work explores how a positive meaning can be produced around change (Delbridge & Edwards, 2008, Rao, Monin & Durand, 2003), we show that building opportunities for change also involves calling into question existing institutions through the production of a negative meaning. Creating opportunities for change requires theorising the change as a welcome, natural or even inevitable evolution. This means complying with a rationale of natural evolution according to exogenous laws (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) like the generalisation of digital technology in the media. This type of justification reduces the cognitive cost for the actors who naturally abandon their institutions to adhere to new forms of institution. Analogies and comparison can play a major role in conveying this meaning. The actors must gain the interest of their audience by enabling them to envisage situations from which they can draw benefit.

Opportunities are also created when the challengers release resources and manage to pre-empt them for their own use. One of the reasons for the domination of certain actors in concentrated fields is due to their control over certain key resources which makes them scarce or costly to replace. This form of control is often not called into question, as in the music industry, for instance, where leading producers and record companies generally control the catalogues (Hensmans, 2003). In the context of an opportunity-creating strategy, this principle should be reviewed. Thus, the problematisation of the scarcity of resources via discursive work can allow the challengers to obtain the release of new resources. To be convincing, the problematisation may be backed up by a rhetoric of justice that describes the extent to which the change can provide consumers with more choice and freedom by loosening the grip of the dominant actors. Moreover, this study also points to the role that ad hominem theorisation can play by helping to demonize the dominant actors and discredit their intentions and actions. This strategy attempts to give the impression that the interests of the dominant actors are incompatible with the public interest.

The resources that can be released must then be pre-empted by the challengers, using discourse to legitimise their right to receive and exploit the resources in the field. Here, the challengers need to construct their own legitimacy, a technical legitimacy that aims to demonstrate that they have the skills and capacity to run the activities in the field.

Lastly, the creation of opportunities requires the development of back up from social relations and the support and extension of these relations. These social relations often need to include a large number of actors but should also target and benefit from the support of influential actors from the field, as Hargadon and Douglas (2001) argued in their study of the collaboration between Edison and the Morgan Stanley bank. Some studies exploring the collective nature of institutional work highlight the importance of critical mass (Delacour &

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Leca 2011) and reaching a threshold that triggers change. Without wholly corroborating this argument, our work shows that the impetus from gathering such support, in addition to the discursive work of creation of opportunity, plays an important role in institutional change. It was mainly thanks to the support of the CSA, suppliers, and some members of the government that DTTV eventually got off the ground.

Countering opportunities

Maguire and Hardy (2009) called the response to disrupting institutional work as a specific means of keeping the institution in place 'defensive work', describing it as largely based on the counter-production of texts. We add to the description of defensive institutional work by underscoring new aspects.

The aim of this institutional work is to maintain the *status quo* by preventing the introduction of disruptive change. Challenging an opportunity for institutional change is based on the production of a negative meaning around the change, and involves theorising the change as unnecessary, dangerous and untimely. This relies on the production of counter discourse and counter arguments that aim, above all, to de-problematise and deconstruct the arguments developed by the challengers.

The justification work to challenge an opportunity also means deconstructing the specificity of institutional change which will make it less attractive and less welcome to the audience. This justification helps to idealise the *status quo* and strengthen the dominant actors' position. The dominant actors can also use analogies or history to remind the audience of other failed experiments in the field. Historic references to failed experiments such as the cable plan, TDF1 and TDF2, and the British and Spanish experiments in DTTV provides a good illustration of this. The other important area in discursive institutional work developed to counter an opportunity consists of protecting resources and their distribution patterns. This aspect, like that of social relations, was neglected in the work of Maguire and Hardy (2009). It involves defending and rationalising the principle of scarcity of resources, making change by the challengers difficult or even impossible to envisage. Protecting resources and safeguarding their distribution patterns in the field is crucial to maintaining the domination of the incumbent players. Several strategies can be used to this end, such as introducing a dramatisation of the impact of change on the public interest. Using discourse and technical arguments, the actors in place can point to the technical difficulties and operational risks inherent in the project. The argument put forward by TF1 and M6 that not all of the frequencies to be released were usable given the technical difficulty is a good example of this.

Finally, countering opportunities also requires political support from within the field itself, especially from actors with whom the dominant players have inter-dependent relationships. Social relations with the world of cinema proved a major advantage for TF1 and M6 given the symbolic weight of this sector in the field and the importance of culture in France. In this case, social ties must exploit the actors' strong identity and their membership to a destined community to justify the support they give one another against the challengers.

Shifting opportunities

While the neo- institutional approach began to explore the ways that dominant actors can defend their advantages, gaps remained in how this could be

achieved. Shifting the opportunities and the counter work offers an original strategy to maintain the *status quo*.

This enables the dominant actors to confront a challenger and try to shift change opportunities to outside the field. Unlike the work on countering opportunities based on the production of a negative meaning with regard to the change and the de-problematisation and deconstruction of the challengers' discourse, shifting opportunities involves hypothesizing an alternative change outside the field that will be theorised as better than the change proposed by the challengers. This was what happened via the construction of the opportunity to transmit TV on ADSL as an alternative to DTTV. The work to produce the justification must, above all, provide comparative criteria between the two change scenarios and then enable the superiority of the proposed alternative to be demonstrated.

By shifting the opportunity for change to other fields, the dominant actors maintain the scarcity of resources in their field. The argument here consists of theorising the existence of new resources that are more available and easier to acquire elsewhere.

Finally, shifting opportunities of change and constructing others that are better and elsewhere requires social relations to be formed with actors from outside the field. As in the work on the creation of opportunity, shifting an opportunity to outside the contested field requires material, cognitive and political conditions for its achievement. By teaming up with external actors, the dominant actors make shifting the opportunity attainable.

In addition to maintaining the support of actors within the field, the work to shift opportunities can also rally support to their cause from other sources if the discourse on the superiority of the alternative change proves convincing. TF1 effectively managed to persuade members of the government of the interest in launching ADSL.

Deflecting opportunities

Finally, among the original responses to disruptive change that can be used by the dominant actors, we introduce a new form that differs from countering or shifting opportunities, whereby the existing actors abandon their defence of the *status quo*.

It has often been argued that dominant actors rarely initiate institutional changes in their field. Greenwood and Suddaby (2006) make this argument, and develop a theoretical framework which nonetheless gives us a glimpse of an exception to this virtual rule. They explain the change by the external demands and pressure that the dominant actors are subjected to. Here, we offer a new explanation to understand how the dominant actors themselves can be a source of institutional change in their own field when they respond to an institutional change that threatens their interests by offering another change within the same field that will strengthen their interests to the detriment of the challengers.

Our case shows two examples of opportunity deflection. The first is that of support for DTTV, with the allocation of resources by blocks of channels to the dominant actors. The second example is the episode of HDTV, which consisted of launching a high definition DTTV that would lead to all of the resources released through the change to be reused for purposes other than the creation of channels by the challengers. Deflecting an opportunity for change therefore consists of building a new opportunity, often by theorising and translating an

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exogenous event.

This institutional work on deflecting change is developed by constructing a positive meaning around the new opportunity. Change is described as welcome and necessary, but only under certain conditions that enable the dominant actors to strengthen their position. Unlike opportunity creation based on the theorisation of change as a natural evolution according to a rationale of given progress, the deflection of opportunities is based on a theorisation that depicts it as an extraordinary advance that justifies risk-taking, and as a gamble often presented as courageous and daring. This type of manoeuvre is thus associated with values linked to the search for excellence and taking bold positions, while the change proposed by the challengers is described as of little interest since it embodies an incremental change.

Deflecting an opportunity for change is designed to release resources in the field while preventing their acquisition by the challengers. The argument states that if the resources are to be released, they should be used for other purposes. Deflecting an opportunity for change also requires support for the actors by influential social relations. This discursive institutional work effectively changes the configuration of social relations in the field. Building such opportunities should mobilise external support as well as attempt to convince influential actors within the field. The more important and influential the actors who join and support the project, the more the symbolism of extraordinary change is visible in the dominant actors' strategy.

Contribution to embedded agency

The second contribution of our study lies in the nature and types of agency used by the actors involved in an institutional change. More specifically, our work explores the concept of intentionality.

Despite the progress made and the critical work undertaken on the strategic dimension and the role of the actor, the concept of intentionality remains complex and subject to debate (Lawrence et al., 2009).

In the present study, we contribute to an understanding of the intentionality of actors from an interactionist perspective. The case makes a useful contribution to insights into the institutional work of actors, whether undertaken by the challengers or the dominant parties, and how their institutional work develops. The neo-institutional approach appears to suggest that actors' institutional work is partly determined by their position in the field (Battilana, 2006; Leblebici et al,. 1991). Because of the cognitive and relational embeddedness of the actors and their interest in the resources in place, the neo- institutional approach identifies links between the actors' position and the nature of their strategic actions towards the institutions that suggest a determinist thrust. It is therefore difficult to envisage that the elite embedded in the institutions and amply satisfied with the distribution of advantages would provide a source of institutional change (Greenwood & Suddaby 2006).

Our work offers a different vision. It suggests that actors can display creativity and innovation in an interpretative struggle, which is reflected in their capacity to adapt and modify their institutional work. Our work is in line with that of Emirbayer and Mische (1999), arguing that the actors' agency is the outcome of a specific institutional context contingent on interactions between the actors and the environment. We also subscribe to the criticism addressed against the excess of intentionality that characterises some work and conceptualises

agency as predefined and a given (Delbridge & Edwards 2007, 2008).

Our work lays the bases for a better understanding of actors' intentionality as an emergent and not wholly deliberate phenomenon. The strategic turnaround by TF1 and M6 in their effort to defend their advantage in the field is a good example, illustrated by the episode of HDTV and the attempt to deflect change to the advantage of the dominant actors.

This aspect converges with recent studies that explore the capacity to innovate in institutional work and the emergent character of actors' agency. Delbridge and Edwards (2008) identify the role of unexpected outcomes and chance as elements that support the feasibility of change and facilitate its establishment.

In the light of our findings from the case of DTTV in France, we suggest another explanation to this phenomenon of creativity and emergent intentionality. We posit that the creative agency reflected in the construction of justification by the configuration of resources and the configuration and mobilisation of social relations is a social skill developed by actors. It is evident in the ability of actors to create new interpretation patterns that make sense of the potential to develop opportunities and anticipate their adversaries' reactions. This social skill in institutional creativity is also stimulated by the emergence of exogenous events that actors can seize upon like the emergence of MPEG4 for the dominant actors in DTTV in France.

Future studies could thus explore and conceptualise this phenomenon of emergent intentionality and the social competencies that enable actors to display creativity and to develop their institutional work further through in-depth analyses of the interactions between various actors caught up in interpretative struggles.

Extensions

The present study is based on a highly specific case. This limits our ability to generalise the findings (Langley, 1999). However, the extreme nature of the case presents a real advantage as, in addition to the in-depth nature of the analysis, it offers an original and extensive contribution that casts new light on the issue of interpretative struggles.

Our work highlights the efforts made by actors to act on the environment by configuring justifications, resources and social relations. At the same time, it highlights the evolution of the institutional context as some changes are put to one side and other events emerge. While not the aim of the study, we should note the difficulty in establishing causal links between the phenomena studied. While we can clearly see the evolutions in the institutional work of actors and in the institutional context, it is nonetheless difficult to establish a direct causal link between the discursive work and the changes that took place in the field of television in France.

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