

(Form 1)

Kyoto University	Doctor of Economics	Name	ZHANG Yimin
Thesis Title	Institutional Mechanisms on the Ground: Places, Individuals and Practices (現場の制度的メカニズム：場所、個人、と実践)		
(Thesis Summary)			
<p>This dissertation investigates how institutional micro-foundation dynamics are motivated and driven by mechanisms across field, organizational and individual levels. In recent years, the micro-foundations movement has emerged in institutional theory, redirecting the focus on the structural influence of institutions to the mutual construction between institutions and organizational/individual actions. Scholars argue that micro-foundation studies can provide a new angle to advance organizational institutionalism by shedding lights on changes and dynamics rather than stability and continuity. However, we still have limited understanding of the situational, action-formation, and transformation mechanisms in institutional micro-foundational processes. To address this important theoretical puzzle, three studies are conducted in this dissertation in addition to Introduction (Chapter 1) and Conclusions and Discussion (Chapter 5).</p> <p>The first study (Chapter 2) systematically reviews studies from 1977-2022 to reveal how situational and transformation mechanisms at the field and organizational levels mediate the relationship between multiple institutions and individuals. The comprehensive review identifies six transmitting mechanisms linking multiple institutions and individuals, including practice, identity, category, pressure, value, and contest. Theoretical and methodological implications for future research are discussed.</p> <p>The second study (Chapter 3) explores how the situational mechanisms of places affect institutionalized practices and institutional actors that inhabit them. Empirically, it investigates inductively how peasants in three regions of Akita Prefecture between 1899 and 1945 preserved the tradition of brewing and drinking unfiltered sake (doburoku) in the face of government crackdowns. Findings show that place exerts agency – indoctrinating, obliging, and rationalizing – in shaping different forms of tradition custodianship – violence, tanking, and sabotage.</p> <p>The third study (Chapter 4) examines how action-formation mechanisms shape the boundaries of strategic organizational practices embedded in different institutional logics. Drawing on institutional logics literature, this chapter quantitatively analyzes panel data on Shinkin Banks' utilization of loans guaranteed by Credit Guarantee Associations. Findings show that the state logic affects the design of organizational practices, while the community and corporate logics affect practices' implementation.</p> <p>The three studies that comprise this dissertation identified and theorized several situational, action-formation, and transformation mechanisms at the field level, organizational level, and in places, thereby enhancing our understanding of institutional processes and dynamics, then extending existing discussions of the micro-foundations of institutions.</p>			

(Form 2)

(Thesis Evaluation Summary)

Embedded in institutional theory and in particular micro-foundation of institutional dynamics, this dissertation provides an intriguing angle to better understand situational, action-formation, and transformation mechanisms linking macro level institutional patterns and micro level actions and processes. Consisting of a standalone literature review piece, an inductive study based on a unique dataset of historical materials and archival research, and a deductive study exploring credit loans of Shinkin banks, this dissertation has mobilized an impressive amount of relevant studies in organization and management and compiled remarkable data. Grounded in an in-depth theorization and empirical capturing of Japanese phenomena, the dissertation advances our understanding of why and how institutions work in historical and contemporary settings.

Chapter 2 – the review paper answered the call for context-sensitive theorizing and outlined how institutions are contextualized through field and organizational level mechanisms. It highlighted the less explored research avenue pertaining to how individuals use the organizational and field scaffolding to scale up the impact of their actions and interactions. Chapter 3 – the inductive paper on tradition and place in the context of private sake making in the Akita prefecture elucidates the agentic role of place in shaping institutionalized practices and collective individual perceptions, judgments, and interpretations. Using a comparative design, this paper adds to an emerging research area emphasizing how the living experiences and interactions of individuals on the ground sustain macro-level institutions. It contributes to inhabited institutionalism in showing how geographic locale, physical environment, and situated experience exert their agency in the process of negotiating institutional values. Chapter 4 – the deductive paper on loaning practices of Shinkin banks under the influence of different institutional logics. Findings show that the institutional logic internalized by the organization is loosely coupled with the implementation of organizational practices. Policy implementation by organizations is not only influenced by internal organizational logic but may also be partially shaped by policy design.

Like any other study, the dissertation also has its limitations, which provide leeway for further improvement and modification in the publication process. The review paper's current coding of literature makes the purpose of the paper difficult to locate. A clearer positioning of the paper either as a review paper or a conceptual paper will help readers better grasp the aim. Using conventional and established classification such as Scott's three pillars may help better organize the complex literature. In the second paper, the role of place in institutional dynamics can be strengthened through a stronger connection with a broader discussion of place in relevant literature, such as a practice-based view by Schatzki, and a deeper conceptualization in linking with institutional theory's views of place. How place as an additional layer/angle can relate to individual, organizational and field levels also can benefit from further elaboration. The last paper can be improved by better articulating how different logics are nested or juxtaposed in the context of the bank industry.

Overall, this dissertation deepened our understanding of the contexts surrounding the microlevel origins of institutional change by highlighting the mechanisms by which the daily institutional implementations of collective individuals can be scaled up to macro-level institutional change.

On October 28th, 2022, the PhD thesis oral examination was held. Pursuant to this oral examination, the thesis examination committee hereby concludes that the candidate has passed all of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Economics.

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