

## Our Theoretical Framework

1/ First we believe that a constellation of desires, beliefs and opportunity is often at the origin of individuals' action, even though these desires and beliefs are not always transparent to the actors and both of them may be inconsistent and contradictory. In this respect, we believe that sociological theory does not possess at present a truly deductive theory of action which enables us to predict and explain at the same time specific actions taken place in specific time and space.

2/ Second we believe that the composition of these actions is responsible for the aggregate patterns we observe at the intermediate (social network, small groups, etc.) and systemic level (patterns of norms, migration, inequality structure, etc.). In this respect, we believe that sociological theory does not possess at present a truly deductive theory of composition of individual actions.

3/ We finally believe that, once come into existence, both intermediate and systemic-level entities affect actors' desires, beliefs and opportunity. Understanding social phenomena implies theorizing the loop between social structures and action (and its components) more than arguing for/against one of the two sides. As a consequence, whether actors' desires, beliefs and opportunities can be taken for granted, or their formation should be endogeneized is a matter that has to do with the research question and the historical time-frame of the explanation. In this respect, we believe that sociological theory does not possess at present a truly deductive theory of the circularity between structure and action.

To be noted: dealing with 1/, 2/, and 3/ probably implies to cope with a more fundamental conceptual problem, i.e. the analytical validity of the distinction between levels (micro/meso/macro or individual / social circles / structure). Namely, to what extent is it possible to identify what belongs to one level and what belongs to the next? More generally, how does one moves from a level to the next? While we are aware of this problem, we are not able at present to suggest an alternative concept to think about the "fractality" of social mechanisms.

## Our long-term Agenda

At the micro-level, we are interested in introducing individual and social identity as a driving force of individuals' action: A/ identity as beliefs (A's set of replies to the questions: what am I and which groups do I belong to?); B/ identity as a desire (A does X because A believes that she/he can signal to others and to herself her identity by doing X); C/ identity as opportunity (if A considers herself of type B, she feels authorized to do X rather than Y). Among intermediate and systemic-level aggregate patterns potentially relevant for identity formation, we are interested in studying the role of social networks which actors are embedded in.

In the long term, our aim is to explore the dynamic loop between social networks and identity. This circular link stems from three basic facts at least: a/ the topology of the network has an effect on the quantity and quality of information that reaches the actor and this plays a role in ego's identity formation; b/ the local network structure in which ego is embedded has an effect on whom ego compares to and this plays a role in ego's identity formation; c/ ego's identity plays a role in choosing which link should be created and destroyed.

## Our Starting Point

In order to deal with the complexity of this dynamic loop between networks and identity, we decided to start with a theoretical model which aims to study the genesis of status hierarchies. Instead of building a model from scratch, we decided to take Gould's model of status hierarchy formation as our starting point.

In particular, the first step of our analysis would consist in introducing local neighborhoods in actors' evaluations of others. This element is indeed absent from Gould model where everyone can evaluate everyone and is aware of everyone else's evaluations of everyone.

In our view, Gould's model is relevant starting point for exploring the role of identity as a driving force of human behavior for the following reason.

Gould's model indeed assumes that actors want to see reciprocated the positive evaluations they give to other actors (actors may have different levels of tolerance towards non-reciprocated positive evaluations). This assumption –which probably constitutes the most original idea at the heart of Gould's model– may be justified in terms of identity. It seems reasonable to imagine that not being reciprocated represents an attack to actors' identity in that this may signal to the actor that she/he is not enough respectable, good, charming, interesting, etc. (this justification implicitly establishes a link between identity and self-esteem).

Our objective of this first step

First, we want to reformulate Gould's original model in computational terms so continuing Lynn-Podolny-Liu's reanalysis of Gould's model. We believe that this translation will help to clarify the extent to which Gould's model can be considered a network formation model in which actors' status may be conceived as the ratio between actors' in-degree and out-degree. Second, we aim to introduce in the model the usual theoretical models of network (random, small-world and scale-free topologies) in order to study the extent to which Gould's original results are depending on 1/ the existence of limitations on whom can evaluate whom, 2/ the overall configuration of this relational limitations.

Project's Outputs

The ideas briefly introduced above are presented at the workshop on Social Mechanisms and Social Structure (organizers, Jens Ridgren & Christofer Edling) at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Uppsala. The title of the presentation is *Action-Network Loops in the Genesis of Status Hierarchies*.