

Critical realist encounters: Morphogenizing the French *régulation* approach

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Abstract

Throughout the past two decades, Bob Jessop has drawn considerable attention to the compatibility between French *Régulation* (FR) and Critical Realist approaches (CR), arguing that FR implicitly works within a critical realist ontology, epistemology and methodology. Inspired by his insights, I argue that a Spinozian-led Immanent Causality Morphogenetic Approach (ICMA) provides a fruitful avenue for further regulationist research and represents a promising effort to ground FR in (meta)theory, whereby, ontologically speaking, the ICMA explores how structure and agency *emerge, intertwine* and *redefine* each other in and over time. The two approaches mutually reinforce each other: ICMA is able to provide FR with a solid theoretical and metatheoretical foundation, while FR, can enrich the ICMA with its direct engagement with capitalism related studies and a well-developed terminology in the field. The value added of ICMA can be seen in four points: it (1) clarifies the distinction between extensive and intensive regimes of accumulation and the speed of technological change, (2) specifies the problematique of hierarchy and stability of the dominant bloc, (3) fleshes out the problematique of endo-metabolism and hybridity, and (4) provides the

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researcher with a methodological framework to absent the necessary relations at the level of conditioning.

KEYWORDS

critical realism, French regulation approach, immanent causality, material/ideational, morphogenetic approach, structure/agency

1 | INTRODUCTION

French *Régulation* (hereafter: FR) is one of the leading heterodox approaches in the study of capitalism. It delves into the underlying processes and inner social forces that shape and support institutional variations of various regimes of accumulation across time and space. Drawing on the techniques of the French *Annales* School in studying history,¹ FR highlights how different social groups continuously (re)produce the values, norms, rules and ideas of their ever-changing, material and socio-economic living conditions through historically contingent institutional compromises and political pacts. Over the years, FR's focus on the (post-)Fordist regimes of accumulation seemed to tilt the approach's emphasis toward the study of continuity and stability within capitalist regimes of accumulation. Recent efforts, however, have reasserted the ability of FR theory to effectively address questions of crisis and change, particularly in the context of finance-led, multi-scale regulation (Bieling, Jäger, & Ryner, 2016; Ryner, 2012). An emphasis on the two concepts of 'institutional complementarity' and 'institutional hierarchy' (Amable, 2000; Boyer, 1999, 2005; Crouch et al., 2005) has also paved the way for expansion of the approach's study of capitalist diversity across geographies and temporalities.

Much of the most recent work in FR has focused on providing a (meta)theoretical grounding in order to deal with the thorny problem of reification in early FR literature. One of the foremost efforts in this respect was Boyer's investigation of the complementarity between the FR approach and Bourdieusian thought, employing Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *field* to deepen the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the approach by animating the FR concept of the Mode of Régulation (Boyer, 2008). Boyer's Bourdieusian answer to this problem attempted to place the FR concepts of 'institutionally situated rationality' and 'institutional forms' within the concepts of *habitus* and *field*. In so doing, he showed how the 'structured structuring, and structuring structures' aspects of any habitus are always against the background of unevenly constructed thematic fields of domination. This Bourdieusian grounding therefore specified a certain chronological order between the concepts where a constitutive (not mutually constitutive) understanding of structure and agency was present. In tandem with this sensitivity to meta theory and the structure/agency debate, Bruno Amable has also increasingly paid attention to the role of agency in the FR theoretical apparatus, investigating the "stability of the dominant bloc" (Amable, 2016, p. 95) in relation to the 'institutional hierarchy'.

In parallel, Bob Jessop (2001) and Jessop and Sum (2006) has argued in favor of using the strategic-relational approach (SRA) to inform FR. Throughout the past two decades, he has drawn considerable attention to the compatibility between FR and Critical Realist approaches (CR),² arguing that FR implicitly works within a critical realist ontology, epistemology and methodology as it rests on the premise of ontological depth and a commitment to reproduction (2006, p. 301). In particular, he argues that FR's critical realism "derives from Marx and was elaborated via a critique of Althusserian structuralism" (2006, p. 300). Jessop's treatment of the

reification problem was not as ontologically flat as the Bourdieusian attempt. If one accepts, according to Jessop, that material relations are always semiotic and hence there could be no room for any meaning closure in an open world as per the critical realist epistemological position, then the passage between the abstractly distinct tendencies of structure and agency to the concretely relational and complex tendencies of these two implies that a stable reproduction of any social form is not possible. In Jessop's view it is only through a genuine dialectical duality between structural and strategic dimensions that we are able to deal with this reification problem. To that end, Jessop distinguishes his own Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) of Régulation from the 'Parisian' version often represented by Boyer's work (Jessop, 2013).

In this article, I will build on these literatures by arguing that Margaret Archer's CR understanding of structure and agency, as elaborated in the Morphogenetic Approach (MA), can act as a viable complement to FR research. While the concept of analytical dualism, the analytical backbone of the MA, has come under various criticisms (King, 1999; Stones, 2001; Piirainen, 2014), I draw on some recent contributions in the field which aimed to embed the MA within the Spinozian notion of Immanent Causality (Knio, 2018). I argue that a Spinozian-led Immanent Causality Morphogenetic Approach (ICMA) provides a fruitful avenue for further regulationist research and represents a promising effort to ground FR in (meta)theory, whereby, ontologically speaking, the MA explores how structure and agency *emerge, intertwine and redefine* each other in and over time without the recourse for the analytical elision of their inherent properties. The ICMA delves further into the ontological and contextual interplay between these properties by tracing the extent to which these properties *systemically persist within processes of social transformation* (Knio, 2018). The ICMA, by virtue of its philosophical premise in the debates on transcendentalism and immanence reformulates and embeds the material and ideational debates with more ontological depth.

This article will therefore argue that these two approaches mutually reinforce each other, paving the way for the development of a novel methodological toolkit for studying capitalist dynamics from a CR perspective. Namely, the ICMA is able to provide FR – through its focus on context/conduct, material/ideational, transcendence/immanence – with a solid theoretical and metatheoretical foundation, while FR, in turn, can enrich the ICMA with its direct engagement with capitalism related studies and a well-developed terminology in the field. In the next section, I will highlight the chief tenets of FR, MA and the ICMA before I introduce the analytical value-added of the MA and ICMA. Then, I will point to the ways in which FR can be situated in the ICMA before I discuss its analytical implications.

2 | CHIEF TENETS OF FR, MA AND ICMA

2.1 | French Regulation Approach (FR)

One of the chief conceptual components of the French Régulation approach is the notion of an accumulation regime (RoA),³ which prompts FR researchers to tackle the “social and economic patterns that enable accumulation to occur in the long-term between two structural crises” (Boyer & Saillard, 2002, p. 38). These RoA are supported by codified social relations as manifested in different Institutional Forms (IFs) (ibid., p. 37). As Boyer and Saillard (2002, p. 39) point out, Institutional Forms are crucial concepts as they socialize the heterogeneous behavior of economic agents and allow the formation of stable complementary configurations in a given time and place. IFs therefore help to create a bridge between various levels of abstraction of the

system and between institutions and society (ibid.). FR theorists posit the existence of a total of five IFs: (1) the monetary/credit regime, (2) the wage-labour nexus, (3) forms of competition, (4) incorporation of the state into international regimes and (5) the state-economy nexus. These five Institutional Forms originate from key locations in the socio-economic nexus and represent the main areas in which society and the economy intersect.

Although these Institutional Forms codify a set of socialized procedures and principles according to which an economy operates, disequilibria caused by accumulation occur on a day-to-day basis disrupting the stability of the IFs (ibid., p. 41). In order to adjust these disequilibria and render the overall system stable, a Mode of Régulation (MoR)⁴ dynamically intervenes (ibid.). Whereas Institutional Forms represent, constrain and provide the tangible links to spaces for negotiation and signal how to interact with the system, MoRs represent a sort of situated rationality that is context-specific and responsible for steering the aforementioned IFs, ensuring the stability and coherence of the system. The ‘codification’ of MoRs or the manner in which they intervene within IFs is mediated through (i) formal rules and laws, (ii) social pacts and deals generated by institutionalized compromises and (iii) the body of ideas, norms and routines that define the overall system. From this perspective, FR’s central argument rests on the dialectic interaction between RoA and MoR as manifested through the five institutional forms (Boyer, 2001, 2001).

Over the past two decades, FR theorists have devoted increasing attention to the way IFs are arranged across different capitalist systems. For this purpose, they have deployed the Institutional Complementarity Hypothesis (ICH) to elaborate on why certain conjunctions of IFs tend to be jointly observed in different economies (Boyer, 2005). In FR, the ICH has been supplemented by the concept of the institutional hierarchy – the notion that one institutional form lends a dominant tone to, and dynamically guides the development of, the remaining institutional forms (ibid.). The dynamic understanding of IFs in the FR view should further be examined in relation to two key concepts: endometabolism and hybridization (ibid., p. 20). Endometabolism refers to the spontaneous way in which institutional architectures endogenously evolve and self-alter so as to produce tensions, and ultimately, crisis. Hybridization, on the other hand, refers to the process through which institutions external to a specific institutional context are imported and subsequently transformed through their interaction with domestic IFs. Before moving into a more thorough elaboration of how the ICMA can serve to flesh out the chief tenets of FR, I will take a closer look at the morphogenetic approach and the ICMA in their own right.

2.2 | Morphogenetic Approach (MA)⁵

Margaret Archer bases her MA on the concept of analytical dualism – the notion that structure and agency are analytically separable and temporally sequenced (1995, p. 76). Namely, she maintains that social forms exist prior to social action while social elaboration postdate social action and are hence located in different temporal domains. To avoid the conflation of the material with the ideational, Archer decouples her understanding of ‘society’ into two distinct components: Structural Emergent Properties (SEP – the material) and Cultural Emergent Properties (CEP – the ideational) (Archer, 1995, p. 172ff.). Therefore, structures and cultures shape and condition social action, yet agents and actors are not mere puppets or social automatons in this respect. They can instead be conscious, reflexive and capable of attempting to transform their own surroundings. The ability of agents to transform or reproduce a particular existing order depends on the detailed intersection between structure, culture, agency and

people in and over time. Furthermore, Archer points to the ontological distinctiveness of 'society' and 'people', and their contingent mediation through the positions occupied by agents and performed by actors. Society here should be understood as a constellation of structures, powers, practices, norms, ideas and discourses that possess their own material life, forms and effects, and are characterized by their complex emergent properties.

In relation to 'people', Archer advocates a 'thicker' view of human beings and resists the bundling of 'individuals,' 'agents' and 'actors' into a singular entity. Concurrently, she highlights the metamorphosis of these categories over time under the rubric of what she calls People's Emergent Properties (PEP). Accordingly, agency is always 'agency' of something. Agents, always in the plural and never in the singular, are "collectivities that share the same life chances" (Archer, 1995, p. 257). Therefore, agency refers to the relationship between these collectivities and speaks to the process of grouping and regrouping that denotes the positioning of these collectivities vis-à-vis the distribution of resources and the division of labour which circumvents their everyday life practices. Actors, on the other hand, are not collectivities but individuals whose social identities, values, interests and characters are 'forged from agential collectivities in relation to the array of organizational roles which are available in society at a specific point in time'. Both 'agents' and 'actors', however, remain anchored in 'persons', for neither of the former are constructs or heuristic devices: "they concern real people even though they only deal with certain ways of being in society and therefore not with all ways of being human in the world" (ibid., p. 256). Finally, Archer's morphogenetic approach distinguishes between three analytical moments: *conditioning*, *interaction* and *elaboration/reproduction*. I will now turn to recent developments in the MA inspired by Spinozian scholarship and how they can help us advance the original MA.

2.3 | Immanent Causality Morphogenetic Approach (ICMA)⁶

As previously stated in the introduction, the ICMA further specifies the interplay between the material and the ideational. The Spinozian concept of immanent causality departs from the traditional understanding of efficient causality which conceptualizes cause and effect as two separate and distinct forms whereby one results in the other. Instead, it argues that a cause is "explicated through [it] in a non-representative, non-resembling expression" (Diefenbach, 2013, p. 167). In other words, a cause does not determine the effect but is rather expressed within it. The philosophical basis for this argument rests on Spinoza's doctrine of parallelism which speaks to a welter of vexing problems within the debates on immanence/transcendentalism and the material/ideational. Contrary to the simple depictions of Spinoza as a philosopher of immanence (Della Rocca, 2002; Stoker, 2015), a variety of contemporary Spinozian scholars (Diefenbach, 2013; Duffy, 2009; Renz, 2009) show how Spinoza offered a unique way to bypass the ontological problems of dualism and duality. In Diefenbach's terms, this can be best described as a "kind of trans-immanence in immanent terms" (Diefenbach, 2013, p. 167). For many social scientists, this tweaking of trans-immanence has laid the groundwork for a reformulation of the relationship between the material and the ideational where the material and ideational ontologically exist parallel to each other, operating autonomously and according to their own modalities, yet are nevertheless intimately related to each other (Tønder, 2010, p. 67). Hence, the material "empowers the ideational" while the ideational itself should be understood as "an idea of 'something'." That something is the material (ibid.). For Brown, this non-mechanistic understanding of matter is complementary with the critical realist notion of emergence (2002, p. 182). As such, this complex relation here between the material and the

ideational exemplifies a certain form of ontological tangentiality where the point is, according to Tønder, “neither to eliminate the material world from the purview of ideational analysis nor to diminish the distinctive causal powers of ideas; rather, it is to show how the material and ideational are part of the same explanation, one in which the study of causality is a matter of disclosing the many layers along which political change is evolving” (Tønder, 2010, p. 71).

Similar to analytical dualism in the MA, immanent causality powered by the doctrine of parallelism in the ICMA engages with the ontological separation yet contextual interplay between the material and ideational where their interwoven contextualization at the level of interaction (material penetrating the ideational and vice versa) and tangential contextualization at the level of reproduction/elaboration – (dis)junction between structural/cultural/morphogenesis/morphostasis – always operate against the background of their ontological separation. Unlike analytical dualism, the ICMA elaborates on how the irreducibility of the ideational to the material does not necessarily preclude the embeddedness of the former into the latter. In so doing, it shows how a systemic explanation of emergentist relations – necessary⁷ and internal operating across, between and within morphogenetic cycle(s) in tandem with different contextualizations (interwoven and tangential) – equally necessitates a systemic interplay between ontological parallelism and ontological tangentiality. This is further operationalized through the double expressive role of ideas in the form of ideas as *self-explication* and ideas as *adequacy* which will be defined in the paragraph below (Tønder, 2010, pp. 68–69).

By combining the Spinozian concepts of parallelism and immanent causality with the MA, Knio (2018) shows how ideas as self-explication can demonstrate the interplay between dispositions and dispositional capabilities at the level of interaction (T2-T3) in the MA (see Figure 1). Ideas as adequacy occur at the reproduction/elaboration level of the MA and form the anchor point upon which actors reflect on the results, of the results, of the results in the MA. If ideas as explication are contextually interwoven and deal with synchronic internal relations present between and within the three levels of the MA, ideas as adequacy are transcendental and deal with the ever present and immanent necessary relations across the tripartite morphogenetic cycle. These will be explored both theoretically and thematically in the forthcoming sections of this article.

2.4 | Why the morphogenetic approach(es) – the theoretical added value

The ICMA provides dynamic, theoretical and methodological tools from the standpoint of the researcher/observer conducting a morphogenetic analysis. As mentioned above, one of the ways it does so is through two specific roles of ideas: ideas as explication and adequacy. Ideas as explication elaborate on how particular agents make sense of their immediate material and ideational milieux towards the end of the interaction level. More precisely, it speaks to situations where agents’ perceived understanding of system integration (whether activated structures are compatible or not) and social integration (whether agents perceive their social action towards system integration to be necessary or contingent) is always in relation to their reflection about the internal relations of the conditioning level. Ideas as adequacy, on the other hand, refer to the persistent engagement of some ideas across the tripartite cycle (from conditioning to elaboration/reproduction). It speaks to situations where actors embedded in corporate agency attempt to navigate through the results accrued from the level of interaction by consciously thinking about the immanent cause (the necessary relations) that have been present in the

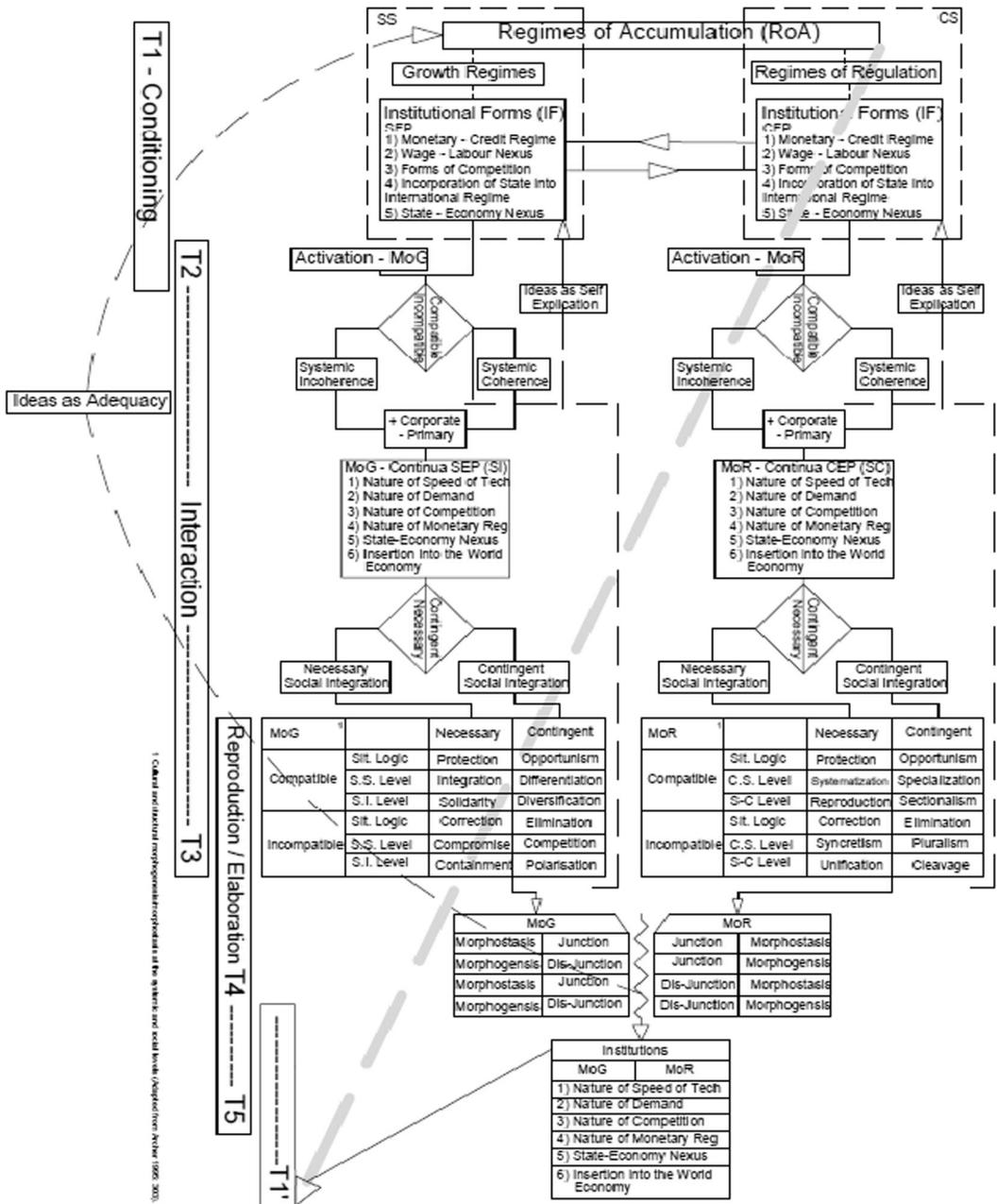


FIGURE 1 ICMA-FR model

system all along. It is the conditioning of ideas as adequacy which paves the road towards the conditioning of another morphogenetic cycle.

Against the backdrop of the above, the value ‘addedness’ accrued from embedding FR within the MA and ICMA can be realized through a series of (meta)theoretical innovations coupled with methodological implications. At a (meta)theoretical level, the properties of durable entities such as Institutional Forms (IFs) in FR can be analyzed through the MA lenses

of 'stratified emergence' given its ontological grounding within a CR philosophy. I will delineate what 'emergence' and 'stratification' mean separately before I link them together. Emergence in CR is generally defined as "situations in which the conjunction of two or more features or aspects gives rise to new phenomena, which have properties irreducible to those of their constituents, even though the latter are necessary for their existence" (Sayer, 2000, p. 12). This definition analytically implies both a synchronic and a diachronic interaction between levels of emergence where a lower stratum is contingently necessary for an upper one, whereas the upper stratum is necessarily contingent on the lower one. This needs some unpacking.

The contingent necessity relation, or the internal relation of a durable entity, is synchronic in CR since there are no necessary reasons as to why different features come together, but once they specifically gel, they necessarily give rise to another phenomenon. For instance, there are no necessary reasons why different collectivities and persons endowed with different histories, capabilities, capacities, resources, values, ideas and interests decide to create an institution. However, once a formation agreement has been reached *in time*, an institution is born out of these features. Conversely, the relation moving from the upper to the lower strata is necessarily contingent since the internal relations of this institution cannot be reduced to the internal relations of its constituents. Yet the context, origin and background of the initial agreement which created the institution necessarily conditions (and not determines) the working of this institution. As such, the necessarily contingent is diachronic in CR given that it charts a movement *over time* between strata.

As a consequence, the interaction between synchronic and diachronic emergent properties reveals two crucial points. First, researching an emergent property at any point in time is feasible even if its causes or antecedent conditions are not available. One can study the working of an institution without necessarily knowing about the causes that created and enforced it. Second, thinking seriously about an emergent property of an institution at any point in time necessarily implies a tripartite interaction of strata: the emergent property in question, and how this property is necessarily contingent on another (backward movement) and contingently necessary for another (forward movement).

Emergent properties of durable entities in the MA/ICMA however are also stratified. In the ICMA, the conditioning level, for example, is an ontological one par excellence since making transcendental arguments about the ontic existence of (an) object(s) in question, necessitates an investigation about its passive and inactive powers always against the background of an open system. Hence, the powers held by a durable entity at the conditioning level can be possessed unexercised, or exercised but unactivated. In other words, at the conditioning level, synchronic internal relations (contingently necessary relations) of a durable entity may either exhibit some forms of coherence⁸ (entities that can easily exist with each other) vis-à-vis various triggers existing in a continuously open system (possessed powers unexercised), or potentially sustain some form of relative stasis (exercised unactivated). Relative stasis can come at least in two forms, resilience or inertia. Resilience speaks to situations where the *possessed powers* of a durable entity can manage to fend off other over determined triggers originating from the open system. Relative inertia, on the other hand, refer to situations where *the ensembles* of over determined triggers cancel each other out in an open system, regardless of the possessed powers of the entity in question. For instance, no durable entity can be called an institution if it is not i) relatively invariant against the turnover of individuals, ii) relatively resilient to their preferences and expectations and iii) relatively inert to changing exogenous circumstances (March & Olsen, 2006).

Conversely, the possessed powers held by a durable entity at the interaction level are not only triggered (exercised) but also activated. Hence, whether collectivities perceive their agential involvement with structures as necessary or contingent is contextually related and varies from one case to another. The powers, however, exhibited at the level of reproduction/elaboration can be either observed or experienced (empirical). They are clearly contingent on the results that have happened at an earlier round of interaction.

In a nutshell, it follows that a combined concept of 'stratified emergence' specifies how the level of reproduction/elaboration is an emergent property of the level of interaction where the latter itself is an emergent property of the level of conditioning. While the synchronic internal relations (contingently necessary) of durable entities portray different power capabilities depending on their placement within these levels, these entities are always conditioned by diachronic (necessarily contingent) relations ever present across the tripartite cycle. All of these propositions can provide more ontological depth for the FR edifice of thought.

2.5 | Embedding FR in the ICMA

2.5.1 | Conditioning (T1)

To embed the FR in the ICMA at the conditioning level, one must recapitulate the following: i) ontological separation between SEPs and CEPs does not necessarily preclude their ontological tangentiality; ii) ontological tangentiality appears at the intersection of morphogenetic cycles at the end of the previous cycle and in the conditioning phase; iii) internal relations are synchronic contingently necessary relations; iv) necessary relations are diachronically accrued necessarily contingent relations; v) both SEPs and CEPs are characterized by their internal and necessary relations respectively; vi) at the ontic level, the internal relations between internal relations (Social Structures (SS) for SEP and Cultural System (CS) for CEP) at the conditioning level are diachronically accrued necessarily contingent relations given that their possessed powers are either unexercised or exercised but unactivated. At a contextual level, this leads to a situation of coherence and/or relative stasis; vii) structure ontologically predates agency at that level; viii) and finally, agency should not be conflated with people.

As such, the usage of RoA in the ICMA operates at both abstract and contextual levels. In abstract terms, RoA hereby is treated as an ontological concept in its own right couched in various stratifications. At the one level, the RoA comprises a *tangentiality* between the SS and CS where regimes of accumulation have both material and ideational manifestations. At another level, it exists where the internal relations of SS and CS speak to the ontological *modal separation* between SEPs and CEPs, which can be referred to in the ICMA-FR, as Growth Regimes (GR) and Regulation Regimes (RR) respectively. In contextual terms, both GR and RR are concretely embedded in synchronic internal relations or IFs,⁹ if we use the FR terminology whilst still exposed to diachronic necessarily contingent relations tying them to their antecedent conditions. These diachronic necessarily contingent relations account for why systems cohere and endure at a particular period in time.

Using the language of traditional FR, and given that the IFs represent an ensemble of institutional complementarities exhibiting specific configurational hierarchies mirroring the 'internal coherence' of a given social system over certain periods of time (Amable, 2016), embedding IFs in the ICMA lexicon implies that the material internal relations of GRs should not be conflated with the ideational internal relations of RRs. For example, the material internal

relations of GRs (SS) under Fordism portrayed specific configurations of hierarchies towards mass production coupled with mass consumption which were relatively coherent or resilient and endured from the end of the second World War to the 1973 Oil crisis for the case of Fordism. By contrast, internal relations of RRs (CS) at this stage refer to the realm of ideas, their system of intelligibility and meanings. They consist of logical set of inter-subjective meanings¹⁰ which serve to support the ideational reproduction of the system. Under Fordism for instance, the cultural meanings associated with mass production and consumption are linked with the discourses on the 'American Dream', i.e. to be able to own certain things such as a house or state-of-the-art technology at the time like a washing machine meant that you had attained a certain social status (Aglietta, 1998).

In a nutshell, considering the above as well as ICMA's 'stratified emergence', the conditioning level should therefore be understood as being populated by properties/clusters of powers – or what the ICMA terms dispositions¹¹ – an amalgam of necessary and internal relations inherited from past interactions which enable the creation, circulation and distribution of capital within the system, the RoA. The RoA in itself is expressed via the distinction between the GR and RR, always embedded in IFs and articulated in an ensemble of analytical continua. Across the ensemble of these continua, IFs exist in the form of institutional complementarities – specific configurations between institutions that create a sense of coherence and/or relative stasis against the everyday triggering stemming from an open system. I introduce below six continua inspired by the current literature in the French Regulation Approach listed in Table 1.¹²

If synchronic internal relations embedded in the ensemble of IFs, mentioned above, reveal the form specificity of a system, then diachronic necessary relations, refer to 'what must be there' for the system to cohere, relatively endure and be codified. Later on in the article where I discuss T3-T5, the reader will see that these necessary relations will be associated with the Immanent Cause(s) ever present throughout the morphogenetic cycle. For now, a good example of these relations can be based on Boyer's distinction between extensive and intensive regimes of accumulation. In its original form, this distinction examines the speed of technical change captured by the rate of productivity increases and the methods by which they are obtained (Boyer, 2005, p. 521). Consequently, labour saving investment and increasing returns to scale are associated with extensive and intensive regimes of accumulation respectively. However, this is yet again, a prime example where the FR lexicon can benefit from a deeper engagement with (meta)theory because instead of a simple relation between speed of technical change and productivity, the distinction between extensive or intensive regimes should be couched at an ontological level that cuts across all temporal and concrete (in thought) IFs. Doing so speaks to a greater complexity pertaining to the creation, circulation and distribution of capital accumulation over time (for an example see Bieling et al., 2016, p. 57; Knio, 2014).

If the previous elaboration tackled structural and cultural conditioning, I turn now to the embeddedness of persons in a whole range of collectivities. It is important to note that, at the level of conditioning, the concerns of people (not agents) are independent of their interactions with society and that they occur temporally prior to them. At this level, there is therefore a distinction between self and social self in such a way that people are faced with objective concerns even before they act socially. Archer describes these concerns as the objective conditions that occur relative to the three orders of natural reality: nature, practice and the social. Namely, nature refers to the concerns people have about their bodies and health, while practice refers to concerns about the performativity of their bodies in society (can we move, can we memorize, etc.). Social reality, on the other hand, refers to the concerns people have about how

they fit into what is normatively appropriate in society (do we talk in a loud voice when it is perceived as inappropriate, etc.). As previously mentioned, all of these three orders are a series of past constructions that have become objective and encoded before people come into the world (e.g. what parents communicate to their child is objective, whereby that thing was previously constructed by other people). At the same time, people subjectively react to these objective realities and, in this sense, give more importance to certain factors over others. Therefore, on the one hand, people are all involuntarily born into a particular social context, whereby certain objective values are imposed on them from the outset; on the other hand, they react inherently subjectively and uniquely to each and every social context.

At the level of agency, therefore, conditioning is the phase at which agents are confronted with a variety of different factors such as vested interests, opportunity costs, as well as degrees of interpretation¹⁵ accrued from the structural and cultural conditioning of these various processes – both synchronically and diachronically. Both primary and corporate agents are present at this level,¹⁶ although primary agents comprise the majority, it is in this form that they chiefly navigate the social embeddedness of IFs. Thus, while primary agents are unorganized and uncoordinated, there also exists a group of people whose involuntary placements in society are momentarily privileged, i.e. corporate agents. The manner in which corporate agents distribute and circulate resources (both material and ideational ones) will be conditioned by the perception they have of their own interests and therefore their position in society. Furthermore, corporate agents also have a more accessible degree of implementation and discretion over the rules of the game and they therefore have increased opportunity costs due to instability within the existing system vis-à-vis other agents. In sum, the way in which corporate agents inherit and perceive their interests in the system contributes to ensuring the continuity and regularity of the overall system.

Ultimately, the value added of applying the ICMA to FR analysis at the conditioning level is that it allows the researcher to identify the necessary and internal relations that characterize coherence and/or relative stasis at a given point in time. As a result, the overall purpose of research is therefore to identify these relations such that the contextual pathologies and phenomenology of a given economy can be better understood. The researcher is able then to better understand the positioning of agents and people, as well as the pathways in which the former contribute to perpetuating and regularizing existing systemic properties. Consequently, the researcher would be able to pinpoint the confluence of material and ideational factors in the RoA and understand how they produce both necessary and internal relations. It should be clear that doing research and taking abduction and retroduction seriously, means we research conditioning at the end, in order to absent the necessary and internal relations occurring at that level. Going back to the example of extensive or intensive regimes of accumulation, while traditional FR would start with these necessary relations to help determine the conditioning, embedding FR in the ICMA would mean that the researcher absents the absences in the conditioning¹⁷ in order to determine the necessary relation of a capitalist system being either extensive or intensive.

2.5.2 | Interaction (T2-T3)

At some point during the conditioning phase (i.e. T1), an ‘activation’ takes place causing something to happen to undermine the relative coherence or relative stasis of the system. Activation should not be conflated with instantiation. Instead, the former refers to when the

possessed powers of structures and cultures (their internal and necessary relations) are both exercised *and* activated. This activation can be exogenous and/or endogenous and implies a triggering of at least one Institutional Form in relation to the coherence or relative stasis existing at T1. For instance, an occurrence such as a natural disaster or a financial crisis can cause such an activation. Going back to the case of Fordism, it has been argued that ‘activation’ in this case occurred both in the form of an endogenous crisis – due to the deceleration of productivity and an increase in inflation – and due to various exogenous factors, such as the increase in the price of oil in 1973 (Boyer, 2000, p. 112; Boyer & Durand, 1997, pp. 3–4; p. 11). Generally, this newfound instability leads to social action (as opposed to social behavior) in a Weberian sense whereby the moment of activation denotes *when* particular social agents begin to re-orient their actions to other social agents (whereas the interaction phase denotes *how* they go about doing this).

Once the system is exercised and activated the interaction between structure and agency occurs at the level of interaction, i.e. Mode of Growth (MoG) and Mode of Regulation (MoR) representing a dispositional capability, or tendencies in the ICMA lexicon, embedded and activated at the material and ideational levels, respectively. The reader should note here while the MoRs have been extensively employed and are widely acknowledged as a staple of the FR analytical toolkit, the usage of MoR here is substantially different from the classic usage in FR. Drawing on the morphogenetic approach, I will be employing MoRs to refer to the continua that correspond to Regimes of Régulation (RR) drawing on CEPs, while MoGs will be employed to refer to continua drawing on SEPs, i.e. Growth Regimes (GR) (as per Table 1). Thus, at T2, when the system is activated, GRs and RRs now respectively move into the two ‘activated’ realms of Structural Interaction (SI) and Socio-Cultural Interaction (SC) (see Figure 1). Therefore, MoGs will be used to denote the structural continuum of possibilities that are able to capture the necessary versus the contingent nature of Institutional Forms, while MoRs will be used to explain the realm of possibilities for their cultural (or ideational) counterparts.

In other words, once the IFs are triggered and activated, they should be understood as a set of continua that demarcate the realm of prior IFs, as well as their future possibilities. The proposed continua are therefore analytical devices that should help the researcher thematically capture the movements between the compatibility of Institutional Forms and their necessary or contingent nature. Repeated from above they are as follows: 1) the ‘Nature of the Speed of Technological Change’, 2) the ‘Nature of Demand’, 3) the ‘Nature of Competition’, 4) the ‘Nature of the Monetary Regime’, 5) the ‘Nature of the State-Economy Nexus’ and 6) the ‘Insertion of the State into the World Economy’ (See Table 1).

In FR terms, activation denotes that coherence is lost and we must determine whether there is compatibility or not. Thus, the compatibility or incompatibility of the activated IF(s) is analysed vis-à-vis the properties of the Institutional Forms at T1. In other words, the way that the IF(s) has/have shifted, i.e. their interaction, following the moment of activation can be deemed either compatible or incompatible with the prior configuration, respectively resulting in either systemic coherence or systemic incoherence. While systemic coherence means that the activation of the relevant IF(s) does not jeopardize the stability of the existing MoR or MoG, systemic incoherence indicates that this stability has indeed been undermined. In both cases they can take three possible forms, a shift, inertia or a strengthening. Whether coherence or incoherence occurs depends on which IF has shifted, i.e. its relationship to the remaining IFs in the complementary configuration. However, in all cases the internal relations are modified even if the form stays the same, yet how they are modified remains an empirical question. In the case of Fordism, for instance, a shift in the wage-labour nexus (e.g. in the form of a flexibilization of

TABLE 1 Continua of institutional forms at the interaction level

Name	Description
'Nature of the Speed of Technological Change'. One part of what FR calls the Wage-Labor Nexus	Speaks to the speed of technical change captured by the rate of productivity increases and the methods by which they are obtained (Boyer, 2005, p. 521). Analytically, we plot this in a continuum ranging from labour saving investment to increasing returns to scale.
'Nature of Demand'—Second part of what FR calls the Wage-Labor Nexus	Speaks to whether economic activity is related to consumption or investment and following Boyer we plot this in a continuum ranging from a demand regime which is wage-led to demand which is profit-led.
'Nature of Competition'	Speaks to the nature of supply characterized in the Growth Regimes (Boyer, 2005, p. 521). Analytically, we plot this in the movement between open competitiveness deriving from the price effect or closed competitiveness deriving from bureaucratic or state control. Competitiveness deriving from quality- or innovation-based differentiation is an integral part of this continuum. ¹³
'Nature of the Monetary Regime'	Can be best operationalized through the nature of monetary policy whether it is autonomous or restrictive.
'Nature of the State-Economy Nexus'	Speaks to the nature of the state apparatus and its embeddedness in the overall economy. Analytically we plot this in the movement between embeddedness and dis-embeddedness of social relations of power and their institutional forms (both formal and informal) in relation to the economy. ¹⁴ In other words, the more embedded these two are, the more we should expect informal institutions that are based on trust, repetition and close knit-ties. On the other hand, if they are disembedded, we should expect more arms-length exchanges that require increasingly formal contracting between structures and entities. All of this is best captured with a deeper understanding of tax and fiscal policies.
'Insertion of the State into the World Economy'	Speaks to the internationalization of the economy-state nexus. We plot this on the continuum between finance as subservient in relation to other sectors of the economy, on the one hand, and its role as a master of these other sectors, on the other. Ultimately, this is a question of value of finance—that is, does financialization create value in itself or is it a means to an end in relation to other sectors? This can be most clearly seen in trade and intellectual property rights regimes and capital mobility.

Abbreviation: FR, French régulation.

labour relations) might cause systemic incoherence due to its privileged position in relation to the remaining IFs. On the other hand, a shift in one of the other dominant three IFs might not undermine the integrity of the entire system, thereby leading to systemic coherence.

Once we can determine whether we have compatibility or incompatibility in relation to a previous level, we will start witnessing the rise of an array of collectivities (corporate agents) that orient themselves towards this new situation. A good example of this movement is the degree of unionization that took place in the transition from Taylorism to Fordism. In terms of the MoG, corporate agents (labor unions) reflected on production conditions for labor, calling for increased concessions for workers (e.g. standardization of working hours, long-term employment, job security, etc.). At the same time, they reflected on the MoR, also calling for increased concessions relative to consumption and a higher standard of living. While Taylorism displayed an embryonic institutional codification of certain wage-labor agreements, the competitive wage precluded workers from acquiring job security, acquiring access to credit money and therefore engaging in mass consumption (Boyer, 2018, p. 17). With the establishment of Fordism, as a result of the behavior of corporate agents, both mass production and mass consumption became possible as a result of the full integration of workers into capitalism through collective agreements, welfare and public services (ibid.).

In other words, the systemic agentic move determining compatibility or incompatibility activates the corporate agents' subjective understandings of their interests within the problematique of hierarchy playing a role in understanding the ordered internal relations at the conditioning level. However, the process through which the double morphogenesis of agency and ideas as self-explication take place, explicitly prompts corporate agents to possibly change their minds about their interests as well. It is through these subjective assessments of their current vested interests, opportunity costs and degrees of interpretation in relation to their pre-existing equivalents that they necessarily or contingently evaluate their current interests in comparison with their internal relations at T1. Corporate agents therefore at this stage decide whether the MoG (independently of the MoR) and the MoR (independently of the MoG) are necessarily or contingently related to the GR and RR at T1, assessed by the degree of complementary tendencies within the system of MoG and/or MoR.

In the example of the shift from Taylorism to Fordism above (and beyond), the ICMA prompts us to trace what occurs after activation on a structural level, as well as allowing us to flesh out the crucial role of agency. Incoherence, for example – and ensuing instability – is marked by an increase in the number of corporate agents as well as a shrinkage of primary agents, as they reorganize and regroup within the destabilized system. As a result, this double morphogenesis of agency¹⁸ will mark the beginning of the (re)making of vested interests in society, which were until now shaped and nurtured via previous rounds of conditioning. At the interaction phase, however, they are reshaped by virtue of complex structural, cultural and agential interactions which are now open, rather than closed whereby agents themselves determine necessity or contingency of altered internal relations.

We can observe the results of the double morphogenesis of agency, which usually occurs in the middle of T2-T3, in the four resultant situational logics that Archer proposes to characterize structural and cultural interactions (see Table 2 below). These situational logics are derived from the juxtaposition of internal necessary relations with external contingency on one hand, and an analysis as to whether such interactions are complementary or incompatible on the other.

More specifically, the *logic of protection* implies a structural-cultural necessary complementary relation where there is a complete harmony between material and ideational

TABLE 2 Situational logics

	Compatibility		Incompatibility	
	Necessary	Contingent	Necessary	Contingent
Situational logic	Protection	Opportunism	Correction	Elimination
CEPs				
C.S. Level	Systemization	Specialization	Syncretism	Pluralism
S-C Level	Reproduction	Sectionalism	Unification	Cleavage
SEPs				
S.S. Level	Integration	Differentiation	Compromise	Competition
S-I Level	Solidarity	Diversification	Containment	Polarisation

Source: Adapted from Archer (1995, p. 303, emphasis mine).

Abbreviations: CEP, cultural emergent properties; CS, cultural system; SC, socio-cultural; SEP, structural emergent properties; SI, structural interaction; SS, social structures.

components. Continuity, not change, is to be expected from this particular context. The incompatibility of necessary structural-cultural interactions, on the other hand, means that an initial will to defect is not strong enough to materialize and hence the *logic of correction*. In cultural terms, this takes the form of syncretism between various theories, beliefs and values for example, while it indicates the containment of different vested interests in structural domains. In contrast, the *logic of opportunism* refers to situations where further material diversification (diversification of production for example) or cultural specialization (rise of particular schools of thought) allows certain groups to benefit from this context and seriously challenge the existing order. The *logic of elimination* or competition signifies the willingness of certain groups to nullify the opposition and completely change the system.

To further understand Archer's four situational logics (See T3 in Figure 1) as well as the dispositions that exist in relation to relevant properties, Table 1 also reveals how these situational logics are delineated across the conditioning and interaction levels. As such, Archer distinguishes between the Social Structures (SS) and Structural Integration (SI) operating at the conditioning and interaction levels respectively. Equally, she distinguishes between Cultural Systems (CS) and Socio-Cultural Interaction (SC) operating again at the conditioning and interaction levels respectively. The reader should thus observe that each of the four logics expresses two agential movements – the first represents the jump from the CS level to the SC level, while the second is the movement from SS to SI.

In other words, under the *logic of protection* and at the level of SEPs, *solidarity* (located at the SI level) envisages an agential movement in relation to *integration* located at the SS level above it. Thus, solidarity is a dispositional capacity of the disposition/property characterized by integration. Solidarity should therefore be understood as an emergent property of integration whereby solidarity is a *tendency* relating to the *property* of integration. In sum, solidarity is an emergent dispositional capacity/tendency of the disposition/property of integration. Similarly, at the level of culture (but also referring to the logic of protection), reproduction can be said to be an emergent dispositional capacity/tendency of the disposition/property of systematization.¹⁹

All of the above is what I referred to earlier as the systemic agentic move determining compatibility or incompatibility which activates the corporate agents' subjective understandings of their interests with the problematique of hierarchy. Now, in my view, the notion of ideas as

self-explication is also an analytical mechanism that is further able to tease out the *problematique of hierarchy* in FR. This is contrary to the *problematique of hierarchy* envisaged by Boyer which followed a sequential logic (e.g. ranging from lowest to highest levels of cooperation – compatibility, coherence, complementarity and finally hierarchy) of the degree of fitness of institutions (Boyer, 2005, 2005). In this model, activation may alter the compatibility of relations through changing internal relations whereby a hierarchy as such may continue to exist but the form of the hierarchy may be fundamentally different. Following the example of the pivotal role that the wage-labour nexus played during Fordism, of course a shift in that IF would cause a shift in the hierarchy, however what the ICMA-FR model prompts the researcher to establish, is if there was a change in position of the form of competition (at the time oligopolistic and also one of the top three IFs that determined the overall MoR) with the monetary and financial regime at the time (a lower IF) then while the overall hierarchy may stay the same, the internal relations of that hierarchy would be different. Thus juxtaposing compatibility with incompatibility and necessary and contingency, breaks the sequentialist logic by widening the possible configurations and opening the question of hierarchy for further specifications and calibrations.

Also, in light of the ICMA, the *problematique of hierarchy* is then an analytical tool that allows us to distinguish and differentiate between necessary or contingent relations, as well as the compatible and incompatible. This is the case because IFs have been triggered and activated, meaning that they are imbued with agential capabilities. In other words, these are not just properties or forms that have been triggered and not activated, on the contrary we should expect behavioral attributes, tendencies and activities associated with these forms.

The notion of ideas as self-explication thus enables us to further develop our understanding of the behavior of agents in the interaction phase because of the double morphogenesis of agency (see Table 3 at the S-I Level). Throughout the process in which corporate agents increase in number and hedge their assessment about the necessity or contingency of the MoG and MoR, ideas as self-explication intertwine with the double morphogenesis of agency. In that respect, ideas as self-explication prompts us to link the structural integration that exists at the level of interaction (SI or C-S) to the structural systems (SS or CS) at the conditioning level. At T3, corporate agents are not aware of ‘what must be there’ – the necessary and internal relations, or RoA – for the forms populating this milieu to exist in the way that they do. However, by virtue of their interactions with other structures, cultures and people, corporate agents become self-aware and conscious of the *forms* that characterize their milieu.²⁰ This allows them to build a more well-defined strategy of action and identity, in accordance with the milieu that surrounds them. For example, turning to when Fordism was shifting to post-Fordism in the US during the mid-to-late 1970s and 80s. The corporate agents at the time could not have known ‘what must have been there’ for the economic slow-down to be occurring, however, they were aware of the forms that it was taking such as steady inflation, which caused the US Federal Reserve at the time to adopt extreme anti-inflationary monetary policies. This means that reevaluation of vested interests, opportunity costs as well as the degrees of interpretation and direction guidance is conditioned by the internal relations of the pre-existing level and that corporate agents are aware of the internal relations (IFs), and it is because of this that they orient themselves in relation to the dispositions of the internal relations at the interaction level and the properties at the conditioning level. In other words, ideas as self-explication allow the researcher to trace back the dispositional capability.

At this stage the researcher must figure out how players navigated the internal relations of the systemic level of the conditioning phase within their own milieu. At the interaction phase,

TABLE 3 Structure, culture, agency and people at the three levels of the morphogenetic cycle

	Structure	Culture	Agency	People
Conditioning (level 1)	Necessary and Internal material relations IF—Internal relations that cohere over of a relatively stable period of time GR—internal complementary relations which speak to the IF at the material level RoA—Necessary relations behind GR and RR. Properties of the system. Is the amalgam of the necessary and internal relations.	Necessary and Internal logical relations CEP IF—Internal relations that cohere over of a relatively stable period of time RR—internal complementary relations which speak to the IF at the ideational level	Social embeddedness of relations, organized in relation to Institutional Forms, mostly populated by primary agents.	First order of concerns (distinction of self from social self whereby People refer to the self) and how it subjectively relates to objective conditions. In FR this amounts to a non-axiomatic treatment of individuals behavior.
Interaction (level 2)	Necessary OR contingent. Compatible or not compatible = four situational logics Problematique of hierarchy	Necessary OR contingent. Compatible or not compatible = four situational logics Problematique of hierarchy	Double morphogenesis of agency leading towards 'self-development.' Shrinkage of primary agents in relation to corporate agents The dominant blocs re-orienting themselves to the situational logics through ideas as self-explication	Second emergent order of concerns: through internal conversations distinction of a variety of modes of reflexivity: communicative, autonomous, meta reflexive and fractured.
	Ideas as Self-explication			

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

	Structure	Culture	Agency	People
Reproduction or elaboration (level 3)	<p>Contingent upon the second level. Absences from the level of conditioning still persist</p> <p>Depending on contingencies brought forward by the second level will be able to identify a dominant situational logic in MoG and MoR intersection of these dominant situational logics can be represented and flesh out the dynamics of the typology crises in vintage FR</p> <p>Ideas as Adequacy</p>	<p>Contingent upon the second level. Absences from the level of conditioning still persist</p> <p>Depending on contingencies brought forward by the second level will be able to identify a dominant situational logic in MoG and MoR intersection of these dominant situational logics can be represented and flesh out the dynamics of the typology crises in vintage FR</p>	<p>Triple morphogenesis of agency: how social actors, influenced by structural and cultural actions in the previous level reflect upon their environment and reflexively aim to define it</p>	<p>Third emergent order of concerns (emotions as commentaries on concerns): Situating different modes of reflexivity's within the situational logics of contextual continuity, discontinuity and incongruity.</p>

Abbreviation: FR, French regulation; GR, growth regime; IF, institutional forms; MoG, mode of growth; MoR, mode of regime; RoA, regime of accumulation; RR, regulation regime.

the value added of applying ICMA to FR is threefold – first, it prompts us to analytically trace the role of agency in more detail, pinpointing the potential emergence of various new social groupings and power structures. On a second level, social stasis and change is situated within a temporal frame, such that we are now able to trace the complex interaction between structure and agency over time – an analytical tool that FR will gain much from. Third, through ideas as self-explication we are able to determine the reasons for particular groups to be formed and the degrees of contingencies in terms of their relationship to the appropriate internal relations as a way to understand possible coalitions.

Towards the end of T3 – and in accordance with these situational logics – corporate agents therefore begin to orient themselves in particular directions. T3 then marks the outcome of the activation and the end of the interaction phase which materializes these orientations concretely. In other words, the material and ideational – vis-à-vis the group interaction between primary and corporate agents that has taken place – have both reached a concrete outcome (although there may be a time lag between these two moments). At T3, there are a variety of patterns that emerge from the outcomes of the interaction and these patterns are what will be explored further in T4.

2.5.3 | Elaboration/reproduction (T3 – T4 – T5)

There are two movements that happen in the elaboration/reproduction phase. The first from T3-T4 represented in FR by the problematique of crises and the second from T4-T5 represented by endo-metabolism and hybridization. I will tackle each in turn. While T3 represents a variety of patterns that are emitted from the outcome of the interaction, T4 begins the domain of the *observed* patterns which amount to a regularity of experiences in relation to the outcome of the interaction. In the elaboration/reproduction phase, the corporate agents are therefore beginning to reflexively imagine their position, such that the dominant corporate agents form patterns based on the situational logics which have been generated through the interaction phase relative to both the MoR and MoG. The quantitative and qualitative nature of corporate agents' interventions (as opposed to the interventions of the primary agents) are key variables in explaining morphostasis and morphogenesis in conjunction with the situational logics they are embedded in. In other words, having identified the prevailing situational logic in the interaction phase, it is now possible to identify the outcomes of the strategies adopted by different constellations of forces in society. At this time, we realized the importance of the triple morphogenesis of agency,²¹ which denotes the actors' personification of social identities previously shaped by agential collectivities at the interaction level (Archer, 1995).

This triple morphogenesis of agency amounts to the third analytical moment relating structure, culture and people over time and aims to discern the conditions under which social actors contribute to the reproduction (morphostasis) or the transformation (morphogenesis) of the existing system. Namely, for Archer, it is in the third phase of the morphogenetic cycle that it becomes possible to identify whether structures/cultures undergo reproduction or elaboration. Additionally, this phase is concerned with the mechanisms by which different situational logics influence the types of reflexivity that social actors, embedded in corporate agents, exert on these structures/cultures. Archer thus refers to this level as 'the result of the result of the result' of previous rounds of interaction: the third level must necessarily postdate the social interaction that occurs at the second level.

In contrast to the situational logics of Archer, FR refers to crises as the main explanatory mechanisms for tracing change within a system. Boyer in particular posits the existence of three types of crisis: (1) crises as external disturbances, (2) cyclical crises and (3) crises of the system of *régulation*.²² In all three of these situations the system of *régulation* at different levels is not able to handle challenges to its core tenets and new institutional compromises are necessary. When situating these three FR understandings of crisis under the new ICMA framework, we can expand our understanding of crises to the *symptoms* of crises which are manifested following the moment of activation,²³ i.e. when one or more of the Institutional Forms shift at the beginning of the interaction phase (T2). Additionally, since the actual effects of the crisis only manifest themselves at T4 – when corporate and primary agents begin to act according to the relevant situational logics that were based on the evolution of the crisis – the ICMA allows us to absent the nature of the organic crisis (in a Gramscian sense). It therefore becomes clear that the situational logics are able to provide significantly more nuance and clarity about the types, causes and foundations of crisis, both materially and ideationally. Additionally, it becomes possible to trace the role of agency as well as identify the temporal sequence through which these crises evolve. In conjunction with this, the potential pathways for moving out of crisis, also become much clearer.

In this regard, I highlight four potential sociological derivations, which are purely contingent on the situational logics highlighted in the prior level (i.e. the level of interaction). In my understanding of Archer's morphogenetic sequence (1995) and her theorizations about reflexivity (2012), these four derivations are as follows:

1. *A junction between structural and cultural morphostasis* (Archer, 1995, p. 308 ff).
Thematically, Archer refers to this as contextual continuity which influences social actors to predominantly foster a communicative reflexivity (Archer, 2012, p. 17). This scenario is the ultimate example of morphostasis and it can be manifested via the following combination of situational logics: structural logic of protection with cultural logic of protection; structural logic of protection with cultural logic of correction; structural logic of correction with cultural logic of correction, structural logic of protection with cultural logic of protection.
2. *A disjunction between structural morphostasis and cultural morphogenesis*
Thematically, she refers to this as contextual discontinuity influencing social actors embedded in corporate agency to foster a predominantly autonomous reflexivity. This scenario envisages a slow-paced movement of transformation (Archer refers to it as morphostasis/morphogenesis) and it can be manifested via the following combination of situational logics: structural logic of protection with cultural logic of opportunism; structural logic of protection with cultural logic of elimination; structural logic of correction with cultural logic of opportunism, structural logic of correction with cultural logic of elimination
3. *A disjunction between structural morphogenesis and cultural morphostasis*
Thematically, she refers to this also as contextual discontinuity influencing social actors embedded in corporate agency to develop a dominant autonomous reflexivity. This scenario envisages a faster paced movement of transformation (Archer refers to it as morphogenesis/morphostasis) and it can be manifested via the following combination of situational logics: structural logic of opportunism with cultural logic of protection; structural logic of opportunism with cultural logic of correction; structural logic of elimination with cultural logic of protection, structural logic of elimination with cultural logic of correction

4. *A junction between structural and cultural morphogenesis*

Thematically, she refers to this as contextual incongruity influencing social actors embedded in corporate agency to predominantly foster a meta reflexivity. This is a scenario where there is a complete morphogenesis and it can be manifested via the following combination of situational logics: structural logic of opportunism with cultural logic of opportunism; structural logic of opportunism with cultural logic of elimination; structural logic of elimination with cultural logic of opportunism, structural logic of elimination with cultural logic of elimination.

To explain the background against which actors embedded in corporate agency undertake reflexivity in relation to the intersection of dominant situational logics of GR and RR, the concept of ideas as adequacy becomes paramount. Adequate ideas do not necessarily relate to the forms or the internal relations of preexisting levels, but they necessarily relate to the nature of the monitoring/reflexivity in itself. In other words, this means that social actors embedded in corporate agency are in a favorable position to reflect back on the necessary relations embedded in the conditioning phase (T1) that have been both paradoxically absent from our consciousness, yet transcendently (beyond the context of T1) and persistently present throughout the entire process. Ideas as adequacy is the mechanism (diachronically accrued) that allows us to absent the Immanent Cause(s) which constitute the necessary relations behind the system. Therefore when dominant social actors embedded in corporate agency fathom the systemic developments that led to this moment – the moments of junction or disjunctions mentioned above – they are effectively *imagining the tangentiality of GR and RR in RoA* and not just their separate modality forms (GR and RR).

In other words, corporate agents begin to fathom a RoA through its absences. This goes beyond what corporate agents knew at T3, which can only contain knowledge of internal relations. Thus, through adequacy, corporate agents begin to absent the absences related to the necessary relations in RoA. Going back to the example of the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, particularly the case of the US prison sector. During the late 1970s there was a significant change in the way the US government approached prison labor. Prior to 1979, most corporate agents were worried about the effect that prison labor (essentially free labor) might have on wages or working conditions (LeBaron, 2008). However, in light of increasing crime rates and overcrowding of prisons during an economic crisis that left little public funds to cope with this influx, corporate agents at the time operated under the *logic of opportunism*. They diversified the labor market by not only scaling up prison labor but also allowing private industry to benefit from prison labor (SI), which was accompanied by the rising workfare policies that touted prisoners being financially responsible for their own incarceration (specialization i.e. CS) (LeBaron, 2008; Peck & Theodore, 2000). This paved the way for legislation that would secure a funding mechanism for the US prison system, i.e. garnishing the wages of prisoners who worked for private industries, to pay for the cost of their incarceration. However, in this example, what the researcher needs to absent is the fact that all of these interactions were caused by the crisis of Fordism that led to the shifting RoA from an intensive regime of accumulation to an extensive regime, which we can traced back from the creation of new markets within the prison sector.

2.5.4 | T4-T5

If the movement in T3-T4 denotes how reflexive imaginaries transcendently attempt to absent the Immanent Cause(s), then the movement in T4-T5 speaks to the objectification and

institutionalization²⁴ of this transcendental movement facilitated by ideas as adequacy. The T4-T5 phase begins through a further shrinkage of corporate agents, as only those who are in a position to fathom the necessary relations in T3-T4 continue to be the relevant players. In other words, these actors embedded in corporate agency can begin to recognize how to institutionalize their construction of the Immanent Cause(s) by becoming aware of why it exists in the form that it does. In the ICMA, this process of objectification expands the concepts of endometabolism and hybridization in classical FR.

In classical FR, endometabolism denotes the internal tensions that arise (Boyer, 2005, 2005) and how forces are metabolized by structures into new forms. Hybridization is the process of transformation that occurs through interaction with local IFs and recognizes that they cannot be implemented in their purest forms (Boyer, 2005, 2005). The example given above about the shifts in the US prison sector after 1979 is an example of endometabolism, and the shift from Talyorism to Fordism referenced throughout this article is an example of hybridization. Both endometabolism and hybridization embodies how actors embedded in corporate agency apply the once constructed Immanent Cause(s) or necessary relations via ideas as adequacy.

At the ontic level, it should be noted that the morphostasis/morphogenesis analytical moment envisaged here feeds into the conditioning stage of the next temporal cycle and so on and so forth (Archer, 1995, p. 337f.). As mentioned above, during the process of objectification and institutionalization, the now dominant actors embedded in corporate agency are formulating or reformulating institutions. This happens through, and as a consequence of the interaction, of the processes of endometabolism and hybridization. In so doing, the dominant actors are cementing new necessary relations, in an attempt to create an eventual coherence at T5. These necessary relations, which would be expressed in different modality forms (new GR and RR) through endometabolism and/or hybridization, are carried through in an emergentist way to T1'.

At T1', the attempts to create new necessary relations which began at T4, will persist but take different forms in the material and ideational domains depending on the level and/or extent of endometabolism/hybridization. It is at T1' where we can analyze how successful or not the *attempt* at coherence was at T5 by the dominant actors, because a series of triggering (non-actualized) can be expected as new social actors engage with the new or reformulated institutions. This will test how successful the objectification process was and condition the extent to which the necessary relations from the past persist beyond the conditioning phase of the new morphogenetic cycle. The *thicker* the objectification process, the more coherence there is between institutions, i.e. the institutions easily exist with each other in accordance with the necessary relations created by the dominant players. The thinner objectification process, the more relative stasis is prevalent, which can be potentially and thematically expressed either as a form of resilience or inertia. Therefore, when we realize the reality of T1¹ as an emergent strata of T4-T5, it follows that the tangentiality of the immanent cause (which has been accrued via the ideas as adequacy) expresses itself in an emergentist way as two separate modalities, the material and ideational in the conditioning phase of a new morphogenetic cycle T1'.

Therefore, this ICMA (meta)theoretical and methodological grounding, allows for a deeper FR understanding of the periodization and the transitions occurring between different morphogenetic cycles within the study of capitalist economies.

3 | ANALYTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR FR AND CONCLUSIONS

The FR body of scholarship has evolved in an eclectic way throughout the 1970s and 1980s. During this period, FR theorists exerted a great deal of effort to counter various dominant narratives: e.g. general equilibrium theory (Aglietta, 2015), structural Marxism (Lipietz, 1983, 1987), embeddedness (Boyer, 1990; Boyer & Saillard, 2002), corporatism (Hollingsworth & Boyer, 1997) and the Varieties of Capitalism approach (Amable, 2000; Boyer, 2005, 2005). To my mind, each time FR scholars responded to these different narratives, they slightly diverged from their overall agenda, building a stronger and more theoretically robust version of their theory. Adversely, this eclecticism also had a downside: their response to other perspectives resulted in a pragmatic – rather than systematic – development of the overall approach. In this sense, the ontological claims of the theory were implied, but the theory itself remained deprived of a strong ontological footing, with a clear and systematic specification of mechanisms and concepts involved. For instance, Regimes of Accumulation and Growth Regimes continue to be used interchangeably despite the fact that there is an analytical need to employ two separate concepts – one to describe the economic system, while the other to explain the working of the economy. Thus, an ontological turn in the literature is much needed.

I have shown that in order to bolster the analytical robustness of FR, this school needs to be embedded within a stratified ontological framework that allows us to understand the articulation between the disposition of economic structures and dispositional capabilities of the economy and its totality, and later the manifestation of all these in the context of a multitude of crises that are inherent to any capitalist system. This is precisely where the morphogenizing of FR à la immanent causality is useful as it delineates a certain temporality, and the importance of rhythm across time between context and conduct.

The ICMA model is able to provide FR with ontological depth – rather than positing a co-constitutive relation between RoA and MoR through Institutional Forms, embedding FR into ICMA prompts the treatment of IFs as the internal relations of emergent properties. These internal relations, in turn, can be located at different stratified domains: conditioning, interaction and elaboration/reproduction. Furthermore, stratified emergence allows us to distinguish between the material and ideational aspects of structure amidst their emergent relational linkages. Hence, the FR-ICMA model distinguishes between Growth Regimes (GRs)/material and Regimes of Regulation (RoRs)/ideational but always rooted through respective IFs at the level of conditioning. At the level of interaction, we see the juxtaposition between Modes of Growth (MoGs) and Modes of Regulation (MoR). The elaboration/reproduction level further expands FR classification of crises by highlighting the various junctures and disjunctures between structural and cultural morphostasis and morphogenesis mediated by agents and always anchored through people.

The value added of ICMA can be seen in four points. First, it directs us to separate the canonical distinction between extensive and intensive regimes of accumulation and the speed of technological change captured by rates of productivity (Boyer, 2005, 2005). The latter is an Institutional Form or an internal relation, while the former can be an immanent cause or the necessary relations that are transcendently present through a particular cycle of capital accumulation. Second, the concept of ‘ideas as self-explication’ further specifies the problematic of hierarchy and its relation to the stability of the dominant bloc (or lack of it). It does so by widening the scope of the various situational logics that can happen in relation to that level. Additionally, it accomplishes this explanation by examining how agents engage with the internal relations of the previous level, thus bringing in an analysis that is able to focus on

powerful groups. Third, the concept of 'ideas as adequacy' fleshes out and specifies more concretely the problematique of endometabolism and hybridity. It explains how actors embedded in corporate agency navigate through a variety of accrued contexts inherited from the previous situational logics and how some actors reflect on creating newly formed contexts by persistently engaging with the immanent cause(s) (extensive or intensive in this case), and by attempting to cement the persistence of new necessary relations into a subsequent morphogenetic cycle. Fourthly, with the incorporation of ideas as adequacy, we can begin to see that the researcher should be absenting the necessary relations which exist at the level of conditioning and therefore means that the research must begin at the level of interaction. Instead of just a retrodution, the ICMA is a series of retrodictions against the background of complex backward and forward retroductions.

In a nutshell, not only does this allow a (meta)theoretical embedding, but it also prompts us to draw linkages between (meta)theory, contextual analysis and the complex methodological interplay between economics and the economy. In so doing, one can also realize how the incorporation of FR into the ICMA can solidify the latter by providing it with a wider socio-economic analytical toolkits to study contemporary capitalism(s). This article focused much on examples derived from Fordism, given that it is an era that has been well researched, yet the approach that I offer provides an analytical framework capable of taking stock of both the old and the new eras of Information and communication technology (ICT) but also artificial Intelligence (AI) in relation to FR and the new and more contemporary sphere of capitalism.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, 2 vols. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1947); J. Clio, 'Régulation et histoire: Je t'aime, moi non plus' in R. Boyer and Y. Saillard (eds.), *Théorie de la Régulation: L'état des savoirs* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998), pp 49–57; P. Verley, 'Histoire économique et théorie économique' in R. Boyer and Y. Saillard (eds.), *Théorie de la regulation: L'état des savoirs* (Paris: La Découverte, 1995), pp. 521–29.
- ² Critical realism is a philosophy which embraces the necessary contingent since our historically contingent interpretation of reality does not necessarily mean that there is no reality independent of our consciousness of it. Contrary to 'flat ontologies' underpinning other perspectives in social sciences, critical realism advocates an 'ontology of depth' characterised by its stratification and emergence. Under stratification, critical realists distinguish between three different levels: the empirical, the actual and the real. The empirical is the domain of physical experience where reality is nothing else but observation; while the actual presupposes that political events encapsulate all there is to know about reality. The real is the realm of structures and powers pertaining to objects. This does not refer to the elementary constituents of objects (atomism for example), but to the intrinsic qualities, capacities, attributes, characteristics and generative mechanisms that make this object what it is. In other words, the real refers to the necessary and internal relations that constitute an object implying the identification of residual possessed and tendential powers. (Sayer, A. (2000). *Realism and Social Science*. London: Sage.)

- ³ More specifically, RoA comprise the various components that represent the overall tendencies of the growth model, typically of a national economy in a particular time period (Juillard, 2002). In Boyer's words, they are "the set of regularities that ensure the general and relatively coherent progress of capital accumulation" (1990, pp. 35-6).
- ⁴ A Mode of Regulation "establishes a set of procedures and individual and collective behaviour patterns which must simultaneously reproduce social relations through the conjunction of institutional forms which are historically determined and supported by the current accumulation regime. Furthermore, a mode of régulation ensures the compatibility of a set of decentralised decisions, without requiring agents to internalize the principles governing the overall dynamic of the system" (Boyer and Saillard 2002, p. 41).
- ⁵ The explanation of this model draws on (Knio, 2010).
- ⁶ This explanation draws on (Knio, 2018).
- ⁷ The word 'necessary' in both the MA and ICMA points to different usages depending on whether the term refers to the modalities of these relations or to the levels between them. In terms of modalities, Archer (1995) distinguishes between natural necessity operating at the material level (within and between SEPs) and a logical necessity operating at the ideational level (within and between CEPs). In terms of levels, both the MA and ICMA distinguish between a synchronic or contingently necessary relation tying the lower level to the upper one, and a diachronic or necessarily contingent relation tying the upper level to its predecessors (Archer, 1995; Knio, 2018). In The ICMA, both of these usages should not be conflated with the term 'necessary' appearing in the phase of interaction (T2-T3) which refers to the process through which corporate agents subjectively perceive whether their action vis-à-vis an (in)compatible activation of the structural and cultural system is either necessary or contingent.
- ⁸ This specific definition of coherence here is in line with Boyer's definition of the term (Boyer, 2005).
- ⁹ As previously mentioned, the FR literature specifies five distinctive IFs: (1) the monetary/credit regime, (2) the wage-labour nexus, (3) forms of competition, (4) incorporation of the state into international regimes and (5) the state-economy nexus.
- ¹⁰ Here, logical refers to the laws of identity and contradiction (and is not to be conflated with any notion of rationality). It refers to a type of plausibility that is therefore consistent with the overall system and can easily be identified within the system.
- ¹¹ Dispositions are properties whose possessed powers are either unexercised or exercised but unactivated against the background of an open system. They should be understood in contrast to *tendencies or dispositional capabilities* which exist at the level of interaction, i.e. when 'double morphogenesis of agency' activates the system of GRs and RRs (Knio, 2018).
- ¹² There is no specific reason why there is only six but these are the authors re-configuration in light of the ICMA of the five IFs that have been developed by FR.
- ¹³ Boyer (2005) links this to concept of internationalization, I however find this a specific rather than a generic case.
- ¹⁴ I agree with Boyer (2005, p. 15) in his treatment of finance as part and parcel of this continuum, rather than as an independent continuum. For instance, fiscal policy is one particular area where this continuum can be studied.
- ¹⁵ Archer (1995, pp. 213ff.) also refers to the concept of Directional Guidance but I am not including it here since this denotes a major difference between the MA and ICMA.
- ¹⁶ As mentioned previously, Archer distinguishes between two different types of emerging collectivities: Primary and Corporate Agents. The latter type of agent commands a clear articulation and organization of their interests (interest groups, lobby groups, defensive associations); while the former type by contrast does not visibly express its intentions nor organize any type of strategic pursuit. While these two types are not necessarily fixed in time (a primary agent at one time can be a corporate agent at in another), the changes in their positioning potentially indicate whether agents will reproduce or transform an already existing order.
- ¹⁷ If the immanent cause(s) is (are) known, then the task consists of specifying the extent to which systemic persistence of properties existing within between and across morphogenetic cycles is created, maintained or transformed.
- ¹⁸ The concept of 'double morphogenesis of agency' refers to the way in which, collectivities of human beings are grouped and regrouped as they contribute to the process of reproducing or changing the structure or culture of society. In this way, they also maintain or change their collective identities as part and parcel of maintaining or transforming the socio-cultural structures which they inherit at birth' (Archer, 1995, p. 225).

- ¹⁹ If we follow this logic, we are able to understand the three remaining situational logics in a similar fashion:
1. Logic of correction: *Materially*, containment is an emergent dispositional capacity/tendency of the disposition/property of compromise. *Ideationally*, unification is an emergent dispositional capacity/tendency of the disposition/property of syncretism.
 2. Logic of opportunism: *Materially*, diversification is an emergent dispositional capacity/tendency of the disposition/property of differentiation. *Ideationally*, sectionalism is an emergent dispositional capacity/tendency of the disposition/property of specialization.
 3. Logic of elimination: *Materially*, polarization is an emergent dispositional capacity/tendency of the disposition/property of competition. *Ideationally*, cleavage is an emergent dispositional capacity/tendency of the disposition/property of pluralism.
- ²⁰ As can be seen in Table 3, while corporate agents are not the only types of agents populating this level – some primary agents also remain here – they are not necessarily conscious or aware of their surroundings. This is in line with Archer's argument that corporate agents make things happen to other people, while things generally tend to happen to primary agents (1995, pp. 264–5)
- ²¹ Defined by Archer (1995) as a process where “the particular social identities of individual social actors are forged from agential collectivities in relation to the array of organizational roles which are available in society at that specific point in time” (pp. 255f.). In other words, agency conditions at this stage (but does not determine) how different social roles are occupied (ibid., p. 275).
- ²² For an explanation of each of the different types of crises see Boyer and Saillard (2002) chapter 35.
- ²³ They remain nonetheless always conditioned by previous layers in and over time.
- ²⁴ I am referring here to the objectification of institutions. In their quest to cement the necessary relations, social actors embedded in corporate agency are treating institutions here as fixed entities or objects codified in particular spatio-temporal conjunctures.

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