Reflexivity and the institutional entrepreneur: a historical exploration

Abstract

This article sets the idea of the 'institutional entrepreneur' in the context of the 'autonomous reflexive' as developed in the work of Margaret Archer. It argues that the latter notion provides a helpful approach to the issue of agency that has bedevilled the new institutionalist project. A detailed account, using the lens supplied by the notion of the autonomous reflexive, is given of the formation of Sir Andrew Barclay Walker, a pioneer of directly managed public houses. The article suggests that Walker used taken-for-granted practice transferred from elsewhere to develop his managerial systems. The importance of aspects of Walker's Scottish background, such as education and church governance is stressed. The account of agency supplied by Archer is seen to be a conception of agency that can inform the debate over the nature of institutional entrepreneurship.

Key words: institutional entrepreneur; critical realism; agency and structure; management history

Introduction

The notion of the institutional entrepreneur is one response to the concern about the lack of due attention to agency and interest in the new institutionalist project. However, the concept tends to describe the phenomenon under inspection rather than analyzing it, leaving assumptions about the nature of agency unexamined that could open the door to rational choice models, the inadequacy of which was one of the prime motivating forces behind the original formulations of the new institutionalist approach. What the notion does raise, however, are important questions about the nature of agency. That is, how is it that in a shared institutional environment some appear to be the instigators of change? It is this propensity to come into collision with established practices and to seek to change them that is in need of explanation and here notions of reflexivity based on the morphogenetic approach of Margaret Archer are introduced and explored through a detailed historical case study.

The empirical focus of this article is the formation of the managerial practice of Sir Andrew Barclay Walker, driving force behind the brewers Peter Walker & Son. This company dominated the pubs of Merseyside in the late nineteenth century. In doing so it was distinctive in employing salaried managers, rather than tenants, to run its pubs. This, together with its associated managerial hierarchy, is the innovation in management that Walker introduced. It is important more generally as an example of innovation in management practice in service as opposed to manufacturing industry. However, the article is not concerned with the details of this innovation (because they are dealt with elsewhere (Mutch 2006)), but rather with the influences which shaped Walker.

A prime concern of the article is with the paradox of 'embedded agency'. That is, to be consistent with an institutional framework, any consideration of agency has to consider the ways in which actors can escape the strong conditioning that is assumed to be supplied by institutional frameworks. This leads to a consideration of the influential account of Emirbayer and Mische which suggests a focus on three dimensions of agency. In turn, this frames an outline of the approaches of Giddens and Bourdieu given their importance in both this account and new institiutionalist accounts more generally. However, most of the discussion is concerned with elaborating the work of Margaret Archer, and, in particular, her notion of the 'autonomous reflexive'. Her specification of the way in which the form of the 'internal conversation' leads to collisions with existing structures and so the potential for change is illustrated through a historical example: the actions of Andrew Barclay Walker in embedding distinctive practices of public house management in nineteenth century Liverpool. The argument is that novel modes of organizing were adopted in the pursuit of profitable activity. The aim was to be an entrepreneur rather than an 'institutional entrepreneur' but the consequence of the former project was innovation in organizational practice. The notion of the autonomous reflexive is found to be a valuable lens for exploring these changes. The article concludes with some suggestions as to how this approach might be developed through a mutual engagement between these two bodies of ideas.

The paradox of embedded agency: reflexivity and the institutional entrepreneur.

Mainstream new institutionalist thought has been criticized for its emphasis on continuity and conformity. Because of its focus on the broader factors which induce organizations to become the same, it has, according to some, neglected questions of agency, interest and change (DiMaggio 1988). One response to this criticism has been the elaboration of the notion of the 'institutional entrepreneur'. These are seen as those who

> deploy the resources at their disposal to create and empower institutions. Institutional entrepreneurs serve as agents of legitimacy supporting the creation of institutions that they deem to be appropriate and aligned with their interests
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> (Dacin, Goodstein and Scott 2002: 47)

One concern about such a formulation is that there is the danger of smuggling elements of the rational actor model back in through the back door, as it were. For example, Fligstein (1997) suggests that institutional entrepreneurs are those who display an array of 'social skills'. He suggests that 'the idea that some social actors are better at producing desired social outcomes than are others is the core notion that underlies the concept of institutional entrepreneurs', which seems to ignore issues about why it is that some rather than others either possess such skills or, more importantly, come to deploy them in the search for institutional change (Fligstein 1997: 398). The focus on 'desired social outcomes' without a tighter specification of the nature of agency risks a retreat to a default model of rationally calculating actors and so a departure from the central insights of institutionalism about the embedding of agency in a network of existing institutional arrangements.

A further concern is that we have a circular definition of what it is to be an institutional entrepreneur. That is, we take evidence of successful change of organizational practice as indicating that it is the result of institutional entrepreneurship; institutional entrepreneurs are then those who produce successful organizational change. What, however, of those who sought change but were unsuccessful? We need, that is, a broader account of those who seek change, whether or not it is successful. An alternative approach (and one partially essayed by Fligstein in the same discussion) is to concentrate on a more institutionalist argument that relates institutional entrepreneurship to position in the field. Thus particular positions lend themselves to successful change, in particular when competing institutional logics open up spaces for exploitation (Friedland and Alford 1991; Seo and Creed 2002; Battilana 2006). These more structural arrangements seem to be an important part of the answer, but again do not tackle the central paradox, which is that actors will have been shaped by the same institutional logics, so how is it that they are able to escape such conditioning and envisage new institutional forms?

One response is to explore the ways that institutions are constituted by discourse. Phillips, Lawrence and Hardy (2004), for example, suggest that the nature and mechanism of institutional entrepreneurship are unclear. They suggest that 'actors are institutional entrepreneurs when they work to affect the discourses that constitute the institutions or mechanisms of compliance in a particular field in a self-interested way' (Phillips, Lawrence and Hardy 2004: 648). However, as Lok and Willnott (2006) point out, this once again with its notions of self-interest seems to presuppose much which needs further explanation. How is such self interest formed, particularly when notions of

discourse are often as all-enveloping as institutionalist perspectives? Once again, we need to consider not only the skills that institutional entrepreneurs deploy but also why they come to deploy such skills in the pursuit of particular projects. What is it, that is, that brings them into collision with existing arrangements in such a fashion that they carry through successful change? A full answer to this question needs to combine a more worked through conception of agency with a consideration of the relationship of such agency to structure. The focus on discourse is important in suggesting to us that the unanswered question is that of reflexivity (Thomas and Davies 2005; Caldwell 2006).

Reflexivity in Giddens and Bourdieu

For the purpose of this article the emphasis is on how this has been treated in social theory. A useful introduction here is the comprehensive overview of treatments of agency essayed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998). They suggest that there is a 'chordal triad' of agency in which it has iterational, projective and projective-evaluative dimensions, the exercise of which depends on the relations with the constraints and enablements supplied by particular contexts. A core argument is that much of the focus of attention has been on habitual action, but that debates like that over institutional entrepreneurship, which they specifically reference, suggest that more consideration needs to be given in particular to projective dimensions. Their concern is, then, with the characterisation of particular forms of action in particular contexts, but this still does not address the question of why it is that some actors pursue particular courses of action when all actors are faced with the same circumstances. They suggest that two authors who have been prominent in new institutionalist debates, Giddens and Bourdieu, are far stronger on habitual action.

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However, as we will see, a closer examination suggests that this is not the case and that there are distinctions which can be drawn between the two. Both, however, fail to give us a satisfactory account and so this discussion forms the backdrop examining the work of Margaret Archer, whose formulations seem to offer more purchase on the problematic posed by the notion of the institutional entrepreneur. However, it is here that we can weave in some interesting and fruitful parallels with the work of Emirbayer and Mische, parallels which offer interesting prospects for further work.

Giddens is the theorist most frequently drawn upon in new institutionalist approaches (e.g. Barley and Tolbert 1997; Scott 2001). However, the focus is generally on versions of his structuration theory, rather than on the reflexivity which is at the heart of his discussion of modernity. For Giddens, reflexivity is the examination and reconstitution of social practices in the light of incoming information, something which he argues is central to modernity. 'What is characteristic of modernity,' he argues in *The Consequences of Modernity*, 'is not just an embracing of the new for its own sake, but the presumption of wholesale reflexivity –which of course includes reflection upon the nature of reflection itself' (Giddens 1990: 38). This is a very strong claim which could in part be justified as a comparison to pre-modernity. However, Giddens' claims go further than this and have to be seen in his valorisation of everyday knowledge, that actors, as it were, 'know how to go on'. He insists, in opposition to the proponents of the deskilling hypothesis, that actors:

> remain skilful and knowledgeable in the contexts of action in which their
>
> activities take place and which, in some part, those activities continually

reconstitute. Everyday skill and knowledgeability thus stands in dialectical connection to the expropriating effects of abstract systems, continually influencing and reshaping the very impact of such systems on day-to-day existence (Giddens 1991: 138).

He does recognise some limits to this but they are very limited. He recognises that everyday information will be screened through existing filters and assimilated to existing models, but suggests that even though:

> there are wide variations in terms of how open a given individual is to new forms of knowledge, and how far that person is able to tolerate certain levels of dissonance … all phenomenal worlds are active accomplishments, and all follow the same basic psychodynamics, from the most local of ways of life to the most cosmopolitan (Giddens 1991: 188).

This very strong model of agential reflexivity, in which all would certainly have the capability of becoming institutional entrepreneurs, is the subject of criticism from writers like Layder (1990, 1997), who suggest that Giddens exaggerates the degree of reflexivity and fails to accounts for differences between actors in their capacity to reflect and willingness to act upon the consequences. That is, he allocates a much stronger role to what we might term 'institutionalised frames' in his account and he goes on to suggest that the notion of habitus, derived from Bourdieu, is a useful one.

Bourdieu is also a figure whose work is drawn upon by DiMaggio (1988) in his concerns about the lack of attention to questions of agency and interest. His notions of field and capital have also, of course, been important in the institutionalist project but for the

present discussion it is the relation of habitus to reflexivity that is of interest. Habitus is a concept that runs throughout Bourdieu's work and is one that is frequently presented in different terms. However, the following from *The Logic of Practice* (1990) suggests the key dimensions:

> The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate ad organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu 1990: 53).

Two inter-linked aspects of this definition need to be pointed out. One is that it is central to Bourdieu's project of overcoming what he sees as the false antimony between agency and structure, replacing this with a focus on practice. That practice, however, is governed by the dispositions continued in the habitus, which regulate outcomes without actors being aware of it. The second is that habitus is, contrary to the usage often made of it, a very strong constraint on reflexivity. It is both 'durable' and 'transposable'. It is durable because it is formed largely unconsciously in particular social settings and because it is embodied. It is transposable because it governs not content but sets of logics, logics which govern actions in different fields according to similar patterns. It is therefore in danger of being a powerfully conservative notion which is good at explaining continuity and change (as in the classic new institutionalist project) but less good at explaining

innovation and change – which is the point of the focus on the institutional entrepreneur (Callinicos 1999). If Giddens concedes too much to agential reflexivity, therefore, Bourdieu gives us too little. Another approach is needed and for this we turn to the work of Margaret Archer.

Archer on reflexivity

Archer's 'morphogenetic' approach, in which the focus is on the relationship between agency and structure over time, was formed in her early work on the structuring of educational change and developed through an engagement with ideas from the tradition of critical realism (Archer 1979). Drawing on notions like the stratified nature of reality and emergent properties she emphasises the need for analytical dualism – the need to maintain a separation between agency and structure in order to examine the inter-relationships which mutually shape each. Her work has been developed in a series of books which begin with a stronger focus on the structural and cultural shaping of the contexts in which agency is exercised (Archer 1995, 1996, 2000a, 2003).

Much of this work has strong parallels with aspects of the new institutionalist project. In particular, her conception of a cultural system comprising propositions standing in logical relationships of contradiction or complementarity which supply situated logics of action has strong parallels with work on institutional logics (Archer 1996; Friedland and Alford 1991; Seo and Creed 2002). However, her more recent work has focussed on issues of agency and this is the focus of the discussion that follows. It must be remembered that all of this discussion presupposes the positioning of agency in relation to a world shaped by the previous actions of other actors which present actors with structures which both

constrain and enable their range of actions. This commitment to a relational form of analysis is one strongly shared by Emirbayer and Mische (1988) but, as in their discussion, the nature of structures has to be bracketed for the purpose of this discussion.

Drawing on the emergence of the person from biological strata, although possessing emergent properties of personhood and so not reducible to those strata, Archer places a strong emphasis on the embodied nature of the person. From this comes an emphasis on pre- and non-linguistic forms of understanding in ontogenetic development. Thus, she argues, much understanding of the boundary between 'me' and not me' predates the development of a sense of self developed through language (Archer 2000a). This is not to underestimate the importance of language in social and conceptual development, but rather to resist the claims of those who see the self as being entirely constituted by discourse. Notions of the self may be so determined, but we should not commit the epistemic fallacy of reducing the ontology of self to conceptions of the self.

From these foundations, Archer also places considerable emphasis on the emotional commitments of the person, in direct critique of the poverty of the rational actor model (Archer 2000b). This person is conceived of as a strong evaluator of moral projects. The focus is, then, on ends not means as the prime concerns of persons, who engage in and reflexively monitor personal projects. The form of evaluation is the internal conversation, in which persons engage in debate on their concerns (Archer 2003). This notion is developed from the American pragmatist tradition. Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 974) also suggest that such conversations are central to the exercise of agency; 'we ground

this capacity for human agency', they write, 'in the structures and processes of the human self, conceived of as an internal conversation possessing analytic autonomy vis-a-vis transpersonal interactions'. However, this conversation, Archer argues, takes very different forms and so leads to different forms of reflexivity. This is, then, a much more nuanced consideration of reflexivity than that presented by Giddens and one which suggests why some come into collision with structures and seek to change them.

Following her elaboration of the notion of the internal conversation Archer argued that there were relatively few explorations of its operation in practice. Holding it amenable to investigation through qualitative investigation, she conducted a series of twenty in-depth interviews. Quite clearly this was an exploratory study with the limitations being clearly discussed in Archer's extended treatment of the selection and conduct of interviews. However, the process enabled her to suggest four categories of reflexivity, although one category is marked more by the relative absence of reflexivity (Archer 2003). These forms of reflexivity are shaped by the interplay between 'context' (that is, the social situation) and 'concerns' (that is, the personal concerns of agents). This is, then, a sociological conception of reflexivity, albeit one underpinned by the cognitive affordances possessed by embodied agents. As part of this formation, the differential access to resources such as, crucially, language may be of considerable significance, although this is not a point pursued by Archer (Mutch 2004c). The ideas presented are avowedly exploratory and are the subject of further development, so for our purposes the focus is on the value of the ideas in looking at institutional entrepreneurship rather than on their formation.

Whilst our main focus in this article is on the category of the autonomous reflexive, a brief discussion of each is in order. For some (the majority in her exploratory study) the internal conversation needs to be completed in the context of others. Concerns, that is, have to be verbalised and shared with others in order for resolution to be obtained. This group are the 'conversational reflexives' and their engagement with the world is characterised by measures to maintain continuity of context. In this they will tend to avoid contact with structures or work 'with the grain', in sharp contrast to the 'autonomous reflexives'. The autonomous reflexive completes their own internal conversation in relative (and these terms are all relative) isolation from the concerns of others. As we will see this has the potential to bring them into conflict with and seek to change the structures which surround them. This feature is shared to some extent by the third category, that of the 'meta reflexive'. The meta reflexive uses the internal conversation not only to monitor personal projects but also to reflect upon the process of reflection itself (thus more closely approaching Giddens' conceptualisation of reflexivity). This does not necessarily lead to broader change, however, so much as to the dissatisfaction of the person with the nature of the world and their efforts in it. The final category is that of the 'fractured reflexive', the person who, for some reason, never acquires the ability to conduct a satisfactory internal conversation. These are society's victims, never able to achieve their personal projects and remaining in the position of what Archer would term 'primary agents', that is, with their life chances determined to a significant degree by their involuntary positioning.

The particular concern of this article is with the potential of the category of the autonomous reflexive in understanding the formation of the institutional entrepreneur. The autonomous reflexive is characterized by an internal conversation which is

> the lone exercise of a mental activity, which its practitioners recognise as being an internal dialogue with themselves and one which they do not need and do not want to be supplemented by external exchanges with other people (Archer 2003: 210)

This makes such reflexives society's strategists, because they are swift to take decisions, decisions which they do not develop in conversation with others. They pursue their own projects in a way which is likely to being them into conflict with existing structures, structures which they either seek to use or to change in pursuit of their wider projects. There are three further consequences, argues Archer. These are that autonomous reflexives are much more likely to exhibit a pattern of contextual discontinuity in their lives, uprooting themselves in pursuit of their projects; they are likely to solve potential clashes by prioritising work; and they are independent people whose concerns tend to make them 'loners'.

In considering what contributes to this constellation Archer suggests that early contextual discontinuity might be important. That is, autonomous reflexives may not have formed at an early stage the rich ties to a particular community that characterise communicative reflexives. Her 'conversational reflexives', with a rich and dense set of ties into networks which they need in order to help themselves make sense of the world, place their prime stress on maintaining such contextual stability. They are likely, therefore, to seek to avoid conflict with anything which threatens this stability. If they are aware of the broader

structures of society they are likely to seek to minimise their contact with them, and to operate with the known and the given. By contrast, the autonomous reflexive has no need of such rich ties. They are more likely to strike out on their own in the pursuit of personal projects. In pursuing such projects, they are likely to be aware of the constraints and enablements that existing structures afford, and to seek to work with and change these to suit their own requirements. This does not mean that they will be successful in their endeavours: 'to call 'autonomous reflexives' strategists no more implies that they possess great strategic virtuosity than does the fact that someone is called a military strategist' (Archer 2003: 253). However, it does mean that they are more likely to be aware of the broader features of the environment in which they operate and seek to manipulate such features as potentially afford them success in their projects. It suggests that it is in the ranks of the autonomous reflexives that our institutional entrepreneurs may be found.

This set of ideas then gives us some features which we might apply to our institutional entrepreneur in order to see if they shed light not only on his formation but on the broader issues. In order to do this we explore a particular historical case, not because it is 'representative' but in order to further develop and illustrate these ideas with a concrete example. There are, of course, questions about such an example and not only because of the difficulties of the survival of archive material. After all, Archer's formulations were derived from detailed interviews with living subjects. It could be argued that we simply lack the material on which to make inferences, especially in the light of the lack of ability ever to interrogate the person directly. However, this might be to concede too much to one form of inquiry. Archer (1995: 116) counsels us against relying solely on the words

of participants themselves. The advantage of historical forms of inquiry is that we can take documents and other forms of evidence formulated for an entirely different purpose and interrogate them. In addition, the case chosen is one which a significant 'institutional' innovation, the embedding of direct management as a means of running public houses, is visible in the historical and built record and on which there is helpful additional material. Given the constraints of space the case is structured according to the key dimensions which we have highlighted so far. These are considered in the form of the following questions:

- What was the nature of the innovation in practice and its links to this particular historical actor?

- To what extent can we classify the form of internal conversation as one of the 'autonomous reflexive? Specifically, what is the evidence for the following attributes of autonomous reflexivity: individualism, prioritization of work; and contextual discontinuity?

- How are these characteristics related to the innovation in question?

Sir Andrew Barclay Walker: autonomous reflexive and institutional entrepreneur?

The particular case that we choose to examine rises out of more detailed work on the running of public houses in the UK in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Andrew Barclay Walker emerged as a significant, if much neglected, figure in this history. In his day he was an influential figure, consorting with the royal family and dying one of the richest men in the country. The significance of his managerial innovations is one reason

for rescuing him from the relative obscurity into which he has fallen; viewing through the lens of the autonomous reflexive is helpful in this operation.

An appreciation of the innovative nature of Walker's activities requires a brief explanation of the economic and regulatory context in which he operated (Mutch 2003a, 2004a, 2006). Unlike in many other countries there was not in the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century (nor is there today) any regulatory ban on the ownership of public houses (that is, those outlets licensed by the state to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises) by those who also manufactured the products on sale. Thus it was that during the nineteenth century, at different paces and accelerating towards the end, there was a trend towards the direct ownership of public houses by brewers. In the vast majority of cases such houses were run by nominally independent tenants, 'tied' to take the products of the brewery. However, in some localities, and Liverpool was the first and most distinctive of these, the employment of salaried managers, liable to instant dismissal, became by the third quarter of the century the dominant form. This innovation can be directly traced back to the partnership that went under the style of Peter Walker & Son. It was formed by the Scottish brewer Peter Walker, who moved with his family to Liverpool in the 1840s, and his son Andrew, who ran the company between 1848 and 1893.

The use of managers seemed to begin in the 1850s and entailed the development of a managerial hierarchy supported by a detailed accounting system. House inspectors checked that the houses were properly run and reported to a superintendent. It is this

system as a whole, rather than just the employment of managers as opposed to tenants, that was the real innovation. It was rapidly taken up across Liverpool, if resisted in other areas of the country by both licensing magistrates and brewers. It represents, then, a considerable organizational innovation of the type described by some as 'institutional change'.

If the nature of the changes describes above qualifies Andrew for the title of 'institutional entrepreneur'; to what extent can we characterize him as an autonomous reflexive? To what extent is there evidence for the attributes associated with autonomous reflexivity?

When Andrew was proposed in 1872 for his first spell as Mayor on Liverpool, having been a Conservative councillor since 1868, a fellow councillor, S. G. Rathbone, commented that he had nothing against him 'except that he possessed to a remarkable degree the gift of silence.' (*Liverpool Daily Post* 28 February 1893). This silence is reflected to a substantial degree in the surviving archives. Only one diary survives, and that contains but a few brief details of appointments (LRO Diary 1868). This lack of either public or private exposition of ideas is one indication of a degree of autonomous reflexivity, which we can take further by an examination of the surviving letters (LRO 4 November 1846). Most of these are brief and to the point, with the exception of inter-family disputes (Moynihan 1985; Scotland's Documents 1861; DRO 17 March, 18 March, 29 March 1875). These suggest set of relationships in which the values associated with money and work take priority. Of course we are faced with considerable problems in trying to reconstruct the form of the internal conversations on the basis of such evidence,

but it is powerfully suggestive of the individualism that Archer suggests characterises the autonomous reflexive.

The combination of this individualism with a dedication to work as the key priority certainly seems to fit Andrew Barclay Walker, especially when combined with the one form of discourse with which he seemed completely at home – that of the ledger. We have, of course, to be careful to bear in mind the nature of the survival of records. Much of that which survives in the case of the Walkers seems to relate to complex trust arrangements on death which necessitated the preservation of ledgers. However, the ledgers that do survive, such as that titled 'ABW private journal' contain evidence of the detailed casting and cross-casting of figures relating to both business and private affairs. Indeed, the latter are very much intermixed with the former, and this extends beyond investment details. For example, it is possible to trace the shooting and yachting holidays in Scotland in some detail (DRO ABW private ledger and cash books; Mutch 2003b). This intense focus on business and the rendering of all aspects of life in the 'language of business' did not appear to extend to theoretical speculation. When funds were being sought for the new University of Liverpool, it was to merchants of Scottish descent that appeals were directed for a chair of political economy, but Walker put his money into engineering laboratories (Orchard 1893). This continued a focus on practical innovation that had seen his father credited with developing the 'Burton Union' system of brewing (Moynihan 1985; DRO 7 August 1875; LRO 1868).

All this evidence certainly suggests that Andrew Barclay Walker meets at least two of the characteristics of Archer's autonomous reflexive, those of individualism and the prioritisation of work. What, however, of contextual discontinuity?

One clue about this during the course of his working life is contained in his obituary, which notes that, after early expansion Peter Walker 'ultimately, afraid of having "too many irons in the fire"… was fain to rest content. His son Andrew, however, was not to be daunted, and as success attended his efforts, pushed steadily on in his work of acquisition' (*Liverpool Daily Post* 28 February 1893). The continuing expansion of the company into new areas – a brewery in Burton, an Irish distillery – plus Walker's heavy involvement in the development of the South Wales coalfield suggests the 'much more varied life course' that Archer argues distinguishes the autonomous reflexive (Archer 2003: 213).

Contextual discontinuity is also important for Archer in initial formation. It also counts, it will be argued, in the notion of 'institutional entrepreneurship' where the crossing of boundaries seems to have been of some importance. Whilst we lack extensive details, the evidence of Peter Walker's activities during his son's early years suggests that marked contextual discontinuity was a central feature. Andrew was born in Ayr in 1824, where in about 1817 his father had taken over the Fort Brewery from his own father. This was not particularly successful as a business venture, failing in 1827. Peter seems to have still been involved in brewing there with John Reid until 1832, but after that year he seems to have switched to the coal trade, running a mine near Patna, although in what capacity is not clear (Moynihan 1985). Moynihan suggests that he then spent time travelling to

install his Patent Union System before moving to Liverpool to establish a brewing firm with another émigré Scot, Andrew Morrison. Andrew Barclay Walker, in the meantime, had attended Ayr Academy before moving to finish his education at Liverpool Institute. This pattern of movement, whilst not conclusive, does suggest the contextual discontinuity that Archer argues may be a factor in the formation of the autonomous reflexive.

If, then, we have some evidence which suggests an approach consistent with the characteristics that Archer relates to autonomous reflexivity – the prioritisation of work, a restless search for new opportunities, a strong sense of individualism – how are we to relate this to institutional entrepreneurship?

The argument is that Andrew Barclay Walker had a particular end in mind, an end shaped by the form of reflexivity adopted, and that he came into collision with established structures in seeking to pursue that end. As an autonomous reflexive he operated in a strategic fashion to fashion new means by which to attain his chosen ends. However, he did so in existing circumstances, which offered particular constellations of enablements and constraints. Part of this constellation related to the particular economic and legal circumstances of the time. These are not explored in detail here, but particular features of Liverpool were more favourable to his experiments with house management than those obtaining elsewhere (Mutch 2003a). However, this gave favourable conditions, but where did Walker obtain his ideas about the possibility of management practice? That is, to what extent were these conscious products of the expression of his reflexivity?

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One part of the answer may lie back in family relations and this introduces a certain contingent dimension into our analysis. Andrew's uncles, David and Robert, were managers of collieries near St Helens (Barker and Harris 1959). This reflects the widespread involvement of members of the extended Walker family in the coal trade. Andrew's grandfather had been a Glasgow coalmaster. His uncle John remained there as a coal merchant, while another uncle, William (with whom he was on much more friendly terms) was a coalmaster at Auchinleck in Ayrshire (Moynihan 1986; Mutch 2004b) . Andrew would, therefore, have been familiar with organizational practices in the coal trade and in particular with the emergence of a group of colliery managers who were employed as mines expanded. Indeed, this involvement went further, as Andrew had colliery interests of his own near St Helens which his uncle David managed for him. In turn, his uncles owned pubs in Liverpool which Andrew ran on their behalf. His use of managers to do this may have given him the idea for a broader use of management.

I want to suggest that other aspects of contextual discontinuity may have come into play here. It is Andrew's Scottish background that seems to have been significant here in a number of ways. One is the very fact of being an outsider in a setting offering scope for change, which may have meant that he was not as committed to existing models of managerial practice as others. Specifically, the tied tenancy system adopted by some brewers in England was not a feature of Scottish practice. The Scottish contribution may also go further in supplying Andrew with both models of organizational practice and the resources to carry them through. Andrew was brought up in the Presbyterian faith of the established Church of Scotland. What might be significant here is not so much the content of religious belief but the taken-for-granted forms of church governance. These

were characterized by the systemic nature of authority, responsibility and discipline, supported by detailed record keeping (Mutch 2004b). A key consequence of the adoption of the Presbyterian form was an emphasis on education which led in Scotland to high levels of basic education.

Now, there are considerable debates about the 'democratic' nature of this educational system, but Anderson concludes

> The lads of parts did exist, but they were drawn from the middle rather than the lower ranks: the children of ministers, teachers, farmers, shopkeepers, and artisans enjoyed opportunities, especially for entry to the professions, which long had no equivalent in other countries (Anderson 1985: 100).

This describes Andrew's time at Ayr Academy nicely. This school was one noted for the teaching of book-keeping. It began in 1716, and received a considerable boost from the work of John Mair, writer of the most widely circulated works on accounting in the eighteenth century (Mepham 1994). Whilst Mair's work might have been superseded by the time that Andrew attended the school that he developed, the centrality of vocational elements continued (Strawhorn 1983). Andrew will have learned, under the fearsome tuition of the writing and drawing master, Robert Taylor, the basics of book-keeping, basics which, as we have seen, he continued to employ throughout his life. In this sense, Andrew Barclay Walker's Scottish background supplied both the discursive resources which shaped his organizational innovations and models of taken-for-granted practice which may have shaped them. The contextual discontinuity in his life shaped his

reflexivity, providing the mechanism for his coming into collision with existing structures and also providing an openness to new forms of organizing.

Conclusion

The notion of the autonomous reflexive has proved a useful lens through which to approach the formation and activities of one 'institutional entrepreneur'. It is important to point out two things in relation to this case. One is that Walker was a significant innovator of managerial practice in the context of both his particular field and of business practice in Victorian Britain more generally. However, the diffusion and acceptance of his innovations within, firstly, the immediate locality, and, secondly, nationally was a protracted one in which other forces have to be taken into consideration. As such the case explored is strictly limited to an individual actor within the confines of one organization and tells us nothing of organizations as entrepreneurs, should we wish to follow that tack. The second is that of course a single case can only be illustrative of a more general argument. Clearly, it would be helpful to extend the coverage to other areas of significant historical innovation. However, the point of this quite detailed exploration is to point to the value of some of the ideas developed by Margaret Archer in addressing the concerns with agency and interest raised by, amongst others, DiMaggio (1988). The question that needs to be considered now is the extent to which these ideas complement the notion of the institutional entrepreneur.

The argument presented above was that the notion of the institutional entrepreneur was one response to the missing discussion of agency within new institutionalism, but that the

development of the notion tended only to reveal further and perhaps deeper gaps in the new institutionalist project. This was that it tended to operate with an implicit view of agency that in its emphasis on calculative activity and self-interest tend to come dangerously close to the rational choice model that institutionalism was developed to replace. Quite clearly, the model of the person as a strong evaluator of moral concerns presented by Archer is in opposition to the calculating and means dominated focus of the rational actor. It leaves room for intentionality but sets this in the context of the reflexive embodied monitoring of core concerns. Whilst, therefore, being more aligned with the original spirit of the institutionalist project, this approach to agency also preserves a space for reason and intention as against those forms of analysis which decentre the subject. Of course, this is a relational concept and the view of the person presented here has to be seen in the much wider context of structures which form the context for and predate the exercise of agency. This then introduces many of the concerns of the institutionalist project, such as the spaces for action opened up by competing institutional logics, but in a way which has a far more robust characterisation of agency.

This conceptualization is a sociological rather than a psychological one: the types of reflexivity identified are not personality types but rather responses to social contexts which are developed in a dialectical interrelationship. However, Archer's broader account leaves space for the consideration of the cognitive limitations of embodied humans that are a feature of DiMaggio's (1997) discussion of the relationship between culture and cognition. DiMaggio uses his review of recent work in cognitive psychology to point to the importance of schemata for organizing ideas. He suggests that this calls into question

the notion of habitus and it is here that Archer's account allows for a more nuanced account of the way in which early experience shapes the conditioning of classification schemes. This connection is further reinforced by the parallels between the notion of institutional logics as developed by Friedland and Alford (1991), upon which DiMaggio draws, and the work of Archer (1996) of the nature of culture, which draws on similar principles of logical relationships between propositions.

Two concerns, however, have to inform any further engagement between Archer's notions of reflexivity and work on institutional change. One is the extent to which the modes of reflexivity she identifies are relatively stable and enduring or are favoured by particular contexts. It is here that the work of, for example, Battilana (2006), which draws on the notion of fields from Bourdieu to develop particular positions which, she suggests, favour the exercise of institutional entrepreneurship is of particular interest. She argues in particular that inter-organizational mobility will be of significance in challenging taken-for-granted conceptions of organizational practice, a form of contextual discontinuity that we can link to our example. In Walker's case, one could argue both that he was in a relatively marginal position in the field in which he was engaged (at least at the outset of his activities) and that his movement across fields gave him access to practices which could be transferred across fields.

One also notes that Walker's innovations took place at a time of considerable flux in the field of licensing regulation. A more detailed account would indicate that there was a degree of ambiguity in the regulations which purported to delineate the field, an

ambiguity which could be taken advantage of to almost smuggle in change (Mutch 2003a). By the time that such changes became open to challenge they had become embedded in a way which not only made them difficult to contest but also, in providing to-hand resources for others, supplied the materials for their own perpetuation. However, in delineating the importance of such contexts which enabled Walker to promote change, one notes that such positions were available to others. It is here that Archer's work suggests why it is that some take advantage of particular 'subject positions' (Maguire, Hardy and Lawrence 2004) rather than others and so complements existing work on institutional change.

The second consideration is that of language. It is possible to suggest that in Archer's concern to stress the embodied nature of her reflexives that she tends to underplay the importance of the linguistic resources upon which they might draw to conduct their internal conversations (Mutch 2004b). Sensitivity to the work of, for example, Basil Bernstein (1996) (work which seems in many respects congruent with the critical realist project) would suggest the importance of access to linguistic resources in shaping classifications which subsequently endure. It is such work which Norman Fairclough (2005) draws upon in developing his critical discourse analysis, work which has recently been aligned with broader work in the critical realist tradition. It is noticeable that debates over the impact of discourse on institutional entrepreneurship have tended to see critical discourse analysis as Foucauldian in nature (Phillips 2003), thus overlooking an alternative approach which is both consistent with the approach essayed here and with much in a more critical approach to institutional change. From Fairclough we can take

the need to examine the interplay between discourse (subsuming language as well as other forms of semiosis such as images and body language) and other elements of the social, rather than the rather totalizing view of discourse which a Foucauldian perspective suggests.

Applying this broader conceptualization to our case study suggests an important part for the built environment in the institutionalization of public house management. That is, an analysis of the extant photographic record suggests a particular form of public house associated initially with Peter Walker & Son (Mutch 2006). This was one which closely mirrored developments in retailing practice, with pubs looking more like shops than the traditional pattern of tenanted houses found in other cities. This can in turn be related to the early practice of Walker of using properties rented on short term leases, thus needing to be given a common appearance in relatively cheap fashion. In turn the common visual appearance was supported by the commonality of approach given by house management. Once this cluster of practices proved successful, the spread of the particular form of house design reinforced the success of the organizational practice and so came to be adopted by other brewers who associated it with the practice of direct management. In turn, such management became a taken-for-granted practice within the city. This necessarily brief account points to the interesting connections that the form of discourse analysis suggested by Fairclough can prompt that shed further light on broader processes of institutionalization, in particular by drawing our attention to the relatively neglected topic of the built environment.

Where, however, does this leave the notion of the institutional entrepreneur? Part of the problem here rests with the meaning of the term 'institution'. It can be argued that change in such embedded forms of organizing is beyond the efforts of any single actor, no matter how strategic and endowed with social skills. However, if we use the term in its broadest sense to cover embedded practices at a number of levels, there still remains the problem of whether our agents of change are seeking to change such practices or whether such change comes about as a consequence, intended or unintended of the pursuit of personal projects. From the discussion above of the *modus operandi* of the autonomous reflexive it can be argued that the notion of the institutional entrepreneur places too much emphasis on the willed and conscious change of practices, rather than on the pursuit of projects which bring actors into conflict with established practices and so engender change. From our discussion above, it might be that the actual spread and diffusion of institutional change depends not on the original actions of the agent for change, but on their enrolment in a wider network, work which might be carried out by other actors building on the possibilities now indicated by the original actor. That is, we may here need to draw upon the arguments of those who have looked at the institutionalization and diffusion of practices (Patriotta 2003). A further problem with many formulations of the institutional entrepreneur is that they rest on a circular argument which identifies entrepreneurs as those who bring about successful change. If we relax these assumptions then we can use the notion of the autonomous reflexive to suggest why it is that some seek change. In exploring how this change happens we can then deploy broader notions such as institutional logics to examine the zones of manoeuvre that are available to actors.

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1/8 Appendix A Bundle 6 in-letters 1887, ABW to David Walker 4 Nov 1846

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D1849 Walker-Okeover of Okeover

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30/1 ABW cash books 1889-1893

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