

**Institutional Change and Imaginaries in the Privatisation of the British Energy  
Market.**

‘Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool  
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## Abstract

This thesis develops an extended institutional account of the changes that occurred in the British energy market 1979-2007. It does this by first elaborating a neo-institutionalist analytical framework focusing upon institutional logics and institutional work. However, as this only limitedly accounts for the changes on the political stage, I extend the account of the British energy market with the help of Cultural Political Economy, especially making use of the concept of the imaginary.

I draw upon neo-institutionalist theory as an established way in which institutional and organisational change can be understood. In particular, this thesis turns to the work of Friedland, Alford, Thornton and Ocasio to examine the ways in which *institutional logics* at the field level are enacted by key actors within the market. This latter point is further developed by drawing on discussions of *institutional work*, as conceived by Suddaby, Lawrence and Leca. The institutional logics literature encourages the identification of key “environmental jolts”, which trigger moments of change. It also serves to identify the multiplicity of organisational responses and the way in which logics, as well as logics and institutional work, can come to be in competition with one another. Whilst these bodies of literature are useful for understanding change, as they prompt questions of *how*, *what* and to some extent *who* is involved in institutional change, some shortfalls do exist. Accounts of change are often conceived of in a linear fashion, and the analysis of structure and agency can often be in ontological contention. An explanation for this tendency emerges from the growth of this neo-institutionalist literature itself, as it has sidelined consideration of the ethico-political and political economy. This becomes apparent when exploring highly politicised organisational change, such as the British

Gas sector that lies at the centre of my own study. From the neo-institutionalist perspective where, arguably, less insight is gained about the political economy and ideologies at play, thus paying less attention to key political actors, political programmes and so on, and how these interact with processes at the institutional and organisational level.

As the political realm is key to understanding the profound changes in the British gas and electricity industries; I draw on Sum and Jessop's Cultural Political Economy, including their critical discussion of the limits of the institutional turn, to develop an extended institutional approach. I make particular use of CPE's concept of the imaginary and the Gramscian concepts of hegemony, historical bloc and intellectuals in this approach. In this recognition of the ethico-political and political economy, the thesis resonates in part with the now often overlooked "old institutionalism" of Veblen, Polanyi, Commons and Schumpeter. CPE's appreciation of the relationality of structure and agency, as well as the role of intellectuals and imaginaries spurs a deepened understanding of the evolution of variation, selection and retention processes taking place in relation to institutional change. Considering *how* hegemony is produced and challenged and by *whom* allows, this alternative and extended institutionalist approach sheds light upon the various battles occurring in the process of achieving institutionalisation.

I explore the utility of this framework in integrating political economy and the ethico-political into institutionalist analyses in a textual analysis of archival documents. The first part of the empirical story adopts an institutionalist framework based on the Institutional Logics and Institutional Work literatures for understanding change in the British energy industries, from post-war period Britain to the early twenty-first century. The second part of the empirical story demonstrates the added

value of the extended framework developed. It shows that while institutional change can be rapid and turbulent, policy-making may appear broadly unidirectional and stable. I find that whilst the intellectuals are concerned with creating efficiently competitive markets as per neoliberal thought, there are often greater battles regarding issues of ownership and ideology within institutional structures. My key concerns relate to the various ways in which political narratives were picked up, ignored, distorted or otherwise translated by institutional actors and how the interplay of the political and institutional afforded institutional actors scope to create and maintain the ensuing oligopolistic situation in spite of a political agenda that precisely aimed to avoid such a market environment.

This work thus contributes theoretically to the institutional literature by offering various tools from which the discussion of structure and agency within institutional change can be reconciled and thereby recovering aspects of the old institutionalism. The metaphor of the hegemonic battlefield utilised when analysing change also aids the understanding of agentic power within institutional change. The historical data utilised in this thesis also allows for the engagement with key debates within organisation studies concerning uses of the past and issues relating to time and temporality. Some of my key findings and contributions relate to the nature of change; in this context, change was highly political and instigated by political actors. Key elite actors on the peripheral of organisational and institutional structures often did work relating to change; this is often where I found intellectuals engaging in hegemonic battles.

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## Table of Contents:

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS:</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES:</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES:</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>LIST OF INDIVIDUALS AND JOB TITLES:</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>19</b>
1.1 Introduction and the focus of this thesis:.....	19
1.2 Theoretical framing: .....	21
1.2.1 Institutional theory and the analysis of change:	23
1.2.2 An extended approach to institutional theory:	29
1.3 Research aim and objectives: .....	34
1.4 Methodological considerations: .....	37
1.5 Findings and contributions: .....	39
<b>CHAPTER 2: INSTITUTIONAL THEORY AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE</b>	<b>42</b>
2.1 Key concepts and developments in organisational institutionalism:.....	44
2.2 Institutional logics and organisational change: .....	53
2.2.1 Embeddedness:	56
2.2.2 Inter-institutional systems and institutions at multiple levels	58
2.2.3 Material and cultural foundations:	63
2.2.4 Historical contingency:	65
2.2.5 Problematizing the meta-theory of institutional logics, institutional change and institutionalisation:	69

<b>2.3 Institutional logics and the organisational field: .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>2.3.1 Defining the ‘field’:</b>	74
<b>2.3.1.1 Field types:</b>	76
<b>2.3.2 Field-level logics:</b>	79
<b>2.3.3 Changing logics, multiple logics and organisational responses:</b>	82
<b>2.3.3.1 Organisational responses to multiple logics at the field-level:</b>	84
<b>2.3.4 Summary of logics and field-level change:</b>	87
<b>2.4 Agency and institutional work .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>2.4.1 Associating work with the regulative, normative and cognitive institutional pillars:</b>	93
<b>2.4.2 Categorising types of institutional work:</b>	95
<b>2.4.2.1 Political work:</b>	96
<b>2.4.2.2 Technical work:</b>	101
<b>2.4.2.3 Cultural work:</b>	102
<b>2.4.3 The role of actors in institutional work:</b>	103
<b>2.4.5 Summary of agency and institutional work:</b>	106
<b>2.6 Chapter conclusions- assessing neo-institutional theory for the study of change:.....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY AND INSTITUTIONAL THEORY</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>3.1 The ‘economy’ in cultural political economy: .....</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>3.2 The ‘political’ in cultural political economy:.....</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>3.2.1 Regulating capitalism:</b>	120
<b>3.2.2 Structure-agency and relationally:</b>	124
<b>3.2.3 Political influences upon change and governance:</b>	128
<b>3.3 Political and cultural considerations in CPE:.....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>3.3.1 The role of intellectuals:</b>	131
<b>3.4 The ‘cultural’ in cultural political economy: .....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>3.5 Culture in political economy: .....</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>3.5.1 Relating the ‘cultural’ to political economy:</b>	139
<b>3.5.2 Culture and semiosis:</b>	141
<b>3.5.2.1 Semiosis, structuration and complexity reduction:</b>	144
<b>3.5.3 The concept of the imaginary:</b>	146
<b>3.5.3.1 Perspectives on the imaginary:</b>	147
<b>3.5.3.1.1 Psychology and the imaginary as fantasy:</b>	147
<b>3.5.3.1.2 The imaginary, imagined communities and cultural models:</b>	150



3.5.3.1.3 The social imaginary and institutions:	152
3.5.3.1.4 Economic imaginaries:	156
3.5.3.1.4.1 Gramsci, hegemony and economic imaginaries:	156
3.5.3.2 The generative mechanisms of an imaginary:	162
3.5.3.2.1 Variation, selection and retention of imaginaries:	162
3.5.3.2.2 VSR and selectivities:	167
<b>3.6 Chapter summary and conclusions: .....</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>4.1 A critical realist ontology: .....</b>	<b>175</b>
4.1.1 Critical realism and neo-institutionalist theory:	177
4.1.1.1 Dualism of structure-agency	178
4.1.1.2 A stratified ontology	180
<b>4.2 Research setting- identifying the field .....</b>	<b>182</b>
<b>4.3 Research design-historical study: .....</b>	<b>184</b>
4.3.1 Source criticism:	186
4.3.2 Explanation and contextualisation:	189
4.3.3 Actors and interpretation:	191
4.3.3.1 CPE, CR and interpretation:	192
<b>4.4 Documents and data collection process: .....</b>	<b>194</b>
4.4.1 Primary data collection:	194
4.4.2 Secondary data collection:	197
4.4.3 Interacting with the archives:	202
<b>4.4 Analytical protocol.....</b>	<b>204</b>
4.4.1 Analysing institutions, institutional logics and institutional work	204
4.4.2 Analysing the imaginary, hegemony and intellectuals	210
4.4.2.1 Problematizing periodisations	216
4.4.2.1.1 Time and temporality	216
4.4.3 The periodisation of imaginaries in this thesis:	222
<b>4.5 Chapter summary and conclusions: .....</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: PRIVATISING BRITISH ENERGY; A NEO- INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>5.1 Changing institutional logics and institutional work in the gas and electricity industry 1942-2007:.....</b>	<b>235</b>

<b>5.2 Post-war Britain and the energy industry pre-privatisation 1942-1979: ....</b>	<b>243</b>
5.2.1 A strategy for the promotion of resources and recovery:	243
5.2.2 Exogenous shocks and the threat to the nationalised mind-set:	246
<b>5.3 Thatcher's Conservative programme 1979-1990: .....</b>	<b>249</b>
5.3.1 Sowing the seeds-making the case for privatisation:	250
5.3.1.1 Institutional work and organisational responses in the initial attempts to implement privatisation 1979-1983:	257
5.3.2 Privatising the gas industry- legitimising the private market logic:	268
5.3.2.1 Institutional work and organisational responses in the privatisation of the gas industry and British Gas 1983-1986:	274
5.3.3 Privatising electricity and the re-institutionalisation of the private market logic:	279
5.3.3.1 Institutional work and organisational responses in the privatisation of electricity industry and the CEGB 1986-1990:	284
<b>5.4 A new Conservative leader 1990-1997: .....</b>	<b>289</b>
5.4.1 Institutional work and organisational responses in the continued attempts to privatise gas 1990-1997:	291
<b>5.5 A New Labour government 1997-2007: .....</b>	<b>300</b>
5.5.1 The private market logic with a social commitment:	300
5.5.3 Institutional work and organisational responses under the public-private logic 1997-2010:	303
<b>5.6 Chapter conclusions: .....</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6: A NEOLIBERAL ECONOMIC IMAGINARY; EXTENDING THE INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH</b>	<b>318</b>
<b>6.1 The concept of the imaginary:.....</b>	<b>320</b>
6.1.1 Thatcherism as imaginary:	320
6.1.1 Hegemony, the historical bloc and intellectuals:	324
<b>6.2 Thatcherism as an imaginary in the privatisation of gas and electricity:...</b>	<b>326</b>
6.2.1 An economy in disarray:	328
6.2.2 Markets as medicine:	335
6.2.3 Institutionalising markets:	349
6.2.4 Securing competition, let us try that again:	354
6.2.5 Repackaging privatisation and the legacy of Thatcherism:	358
<b>6.3 Summary of CPE empirical findings and analysis: .....</b>	<b>364</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>366</b>

<b>7.1 Revisiting institutional theory and institutional change: .....</b>	<b>367</b>
7.1.1 Institutional logics:	368
7.1.2 Institutional work:	369
<b>7.2 Cultural political economy as an extended institutional approach: .....</b>	<b>370</b>
<b>7.2 Synthesising neo-institutional theory and CPE: .....</b>	<b>372</b>
7.2.1 Period 1- 1965-1979:	372
7.2.2 Period 2- 1979-1982:	373
7.2.3 Period 3- 1983-1988:	374
7.2.4 Period 3-1988-1991:	376
7.2.5 Period 5- 1990-2007:	377
7.2.6 Conjuncture and disjuncture:	380
7.2.7 Periodisation and a stratified ontology:	384
<b>7.3 Chapter conclusions:.....</b>	<b>385</b>
<b>CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND REFLECTIONS</b>	<b>387</b>
<b>8.1 Contributions: .....</b>	<b>387</b>
<b>8.2 Critical reflections, limitations and future research:.....</b>	<b>391</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: RESEARCH METHOD, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS</b>	<b>393</b>
<b>A1: Archive biographies.....</b>	<b>393</b>
A1.1: Kew National Archives:	393
A1.2: London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)	396
A1.3: National Grid Archive (National Gas Archive)	398
A1.4: Margaret Thatcher Foundation	400
<b>A2: Research diary.....</b>	<b>403</b>
<b>B1: Common representations of Thatcherism .....</b>	<b>404</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: REFLECTIONS</b>	<b>410</b>
<b>C1: The evolution of the thesis illustrated through supervisory meetings .....</b>	<b>410</b>
C1.1: 23 August 2017	410
C1.2: 18 December 2017	411
C1.3: 5 February 2018	412
C1.4: 26 March 2018	413
C1.5: 17 April 2018	414

**C1.6: 11 May 2018**

415

**ARCHIVAL REFERENCES: CENTRAL GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS,  
MEETING MINUTES, LEGISLATION, PARTY MANIFESTOS AND  
INTERNAL ORGANISATION DOCUMENTS** 416

**REFERENCES: PUBLISHED WORKS, NEWSPAPERS/MEDIA AND  
OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES** 423

### **List of Figures:**

Figure 1 Structure-agency beyond structuration theory (Sum and Jessop, 2013)....	126
Figure 2 Variation, selection and retention (Jessop, 2015).....	163
Figure 3 Volumes of newspaper clippings (National Grid Archives).....	199
Figure 5 A representation of the dialogues and disconnects between neo-institutional theory and CPE .....	379

### **List of Tables:**

Table 1 Data type, sources and amount collected .....	200
Table 2 Identifying neo-institutional units of analysis from data .....	205
Table 3 Identifying CPE units of analysis from data .....	212
Table 4 Populating Jessop's periodisation with concepts and data .....	226
Table 5 Societal level institutional logics and exchange field level logics.....	239
Table 6 Institutional work and related characteristics in the privatisation of gas and electricity.....	241
Table 7 Overview of key events and their significance .....	311

## List of Abbreviations:

BGC	-British Gas Corporation (pre- selloff)
BG	-British Gas Plc (post- selloff)
BNOC	-British National Oil Corporation
CEA	-Central Electricity Authority
CEGB	-Central Electricity Generating Board
CC	-Competition Commission
CPE	-Cultural Political Economy
DGGS	-Director General of Gas Supply
DGES	-Director General of Electricity Supply
DGFT	-Director General of Fair Trading
DTI	-Department of Trade and Industry
E Committee	-Cabinet Ministerial Committee on Economic Affairs
E(DL)	-Ministerial Sub-Committee on Disposals
IEA	-Institute of Economic Affairs
IEM	-Internal Energy Market
MMC	-Monopolies and Merges Commission
NGC	-National Grid Company

GCC	-Gas Consumer Council
OFFER	-Office of Electricity Regulation
OFGAS	-Office of Gas Supply
OFGEM	-Office of Gas and Electricity Markets
OPEC	- Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries
PM	-Prime Minister
REC	-Regional Electricity Company

## List of Individuals and Job Titles:

Cecil Parkinson	- Secretary of State for Energy 13 June 1987- 24 July 1989
Cedric Brown	-Chief executive of British Gas 1993-1996
Clare Spottiswoode	-Director General of OFGAS 1993-1998
Clement Attlee	- Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 26 July 1945- 26 October 1951
C W Brierley	-Managing Director, Economic Planning (BG)
David Howell	-Secretary of State for Energy 5 May 1979- 14 September 1981
Denis Rooke	-Chairman of British Gas 1989-2003
Dieter Helm	-Professor and Economist
Edward Heath	-Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 19 June 1970- 4 March 1974
Geoffrey Howe	-Chancellor of the Exchequer 4 May 1979- 11 June 1983
Glyn England	-Chairman of the CEGB 1977-1982
Gordon Brown	-Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 27 June 2007- 11 May 2010
James McKinnon	-Director General of Gas Supply 1986-1989
John Major	-Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 28 November 1990-2 May 1997



John Wakeham - Secretary of State for Energy 24 July 1989- 11 April 1992

Keith Joseph -Secretary of State for Industry 4 May 1979-11 September 1981

Kenneth Baker - Secretary of State for the Environment 2 September 1985- 21 May 1986

-Chairman of the Conservative Party 24 July 1989- 28 November 1990

Malcom P. Murray -Ministry of Fuel and Power 1946-1959.

Margaret Thatcher -Prime minister of the United Kingdom 4 May 1979- 28 November 1990

Michael Heseltine -Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, President of the Board of Trade 1992-1995

Nicholas Ridley -Secretary of State for the Environment 21 May 1986- 24 July 1989

-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry 24 July 1989- 13 July 1990

Nigel Lawson - Financial Secretary to the Treasury 4 May 1979- 14 September 1981

-Secretary of State for Energy 14 September 1981- 11- Jun 1983

Peter Mandelson -Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, President of the Board of Trade 27 July 1998-23 December 1998.

Peter Walker - Secretary of State for Energy 11 June 1983- 13 June 1987

Richard Giordano -Chairman of British Gas 1994-2003

Stephen Littlechild -Former Professor at Birmingham University (1975-89), and  
Director General of Electricity Supply (Offer) 1989-1998

Tony Barber - Chancellor of the Exchequer 25 July 1970- 4 March 1974

Tony Blair -Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 2 May 1997- 27 June  
2007

Walter Marshall -Chairman of the CEGB 1982-1989

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction and the focus of this thesis:**

The motivation for this research arose from personal vexation with my own energy tariffs and the lack of transparency in the relationship between my service provider and me as a customer. When I began to look into why the problems of comparably high energy prices in the current British energy market exist, it occurred to me that the market within which energy organisations operate is not as competitive as rhetoric may make it appear. In fact, what exists is a market with oligopolistic tendencies wherein six key service providers, or ‘The Big 6’ as they have now been dubbed by the media (British Gas, EDF Energy, Npower, E.ON, Scottish Power and SSE), possess a stronghold on the market and as a result competition is stifled, thus energy costs are inflated. Curiously, this is the result of a series of drastic changes in that market, following a process of privatisation of a nationalised industry, where British Gas and the Central Electricity Generating Boards were the sole providers of energy, with the explicit aim of stimulating market competition.

My background in historical studies and general curiosity as to why the energy markets are in this state prompted me to look further into this empirical problem. My inquiry led me to a transformation in the political and economic landscape in the late 1970s when the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher came to power. This period marked a radical shift in ideological thinking from that of Keynesian economics and the Keynesian Welfare State, to neoliberal discourses embracing the efficient market hypothesis as well as monetarist and entrepreneurial theories (Hay, 2002). The 1970s were marked by economic instability and poor public finances which the Conservative party at the time perceived as a form of state

crisis wherein a new economic and political paradigm needed to be introduced to make the United Kingdom prosperous, efficient and able to compete internationally (Hay, 2001; Parker, 2015). What followed after the appointment of Margaret Thatcher was a period of privatisation in several sectors from education to the National Health Service, to the telecommunications and energy industries (Seymour, 2012). Privatisation brought dramatic political, institutional, societal and organisational change. The new market philosophy under the conservative government was that of competition and the reliance on market mechanisms as the best way to promote efficiency and allocate resources (Helm, 2002; Bakan, 2004). The ideas of efficiency and competition drove a rapid and large-scale privatisation process as the ‘twin pillars of policy in the 1980s and 1990s’ (Helm, 2002:175). This in particular held true for the energy sector and its regulatory organisations.

The focal organisations in this thesis are British Gas (BG) and the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB). These organisations were monopolies targeted by the wave of privatisation set in motion by Thatcher’s Neoliberal government. Prior to the 1980s, these organisations were actually efficient energy providers (George, Joll and Lynk, 1992; Helm, 2002). For this reason, the privatisation of BG- the first of the two organisations privatised- is interesting as it presented great political risk. BG privatisation commenced in 1982; whereas CEGB sell-off started in 1986. BG was made the posterchild for future waves of privatisation, including that of CEGB, represented as evidence of that privatisation was ostensibly feasible no matter the size of the organisation and that it would enhance efficiency (Helm, 2003). Indeed, with the UK being a frontrunner for privatisation, representing the privatisation of BG as successful, whether it was anchored in reality or not, was crucial. Further to this, the sale of BG is significant because it was one of the first

organisations in which the British public (the domestic consumer) were offered to buy shares. More than £21 million was spent on advertising to inspire households to purchase shares in the company. The advertising had a major effect increasing share ownership from 7% of the population (in 1979) to 25% by the late 1980s (Lee, 2013). Around 4 million people applied to buy shares in British Gas and approximately 1.5 million of the individuals were successful in their application and invited to buy the minimum of 100 shares at 135p per share (Insley, 2011; Oxlade, 2013). Thus through the sale of BG, many British households became both consumers of energy shareholders of a major energy provider. Pointing to the involvement of the domestic consumer not only serves to highlight the introduction of another key player within privatisation processes, but also goes some way towards emphasising the scale and scope of privatisation policies as present in not only an economic and political sense, but a societal sense too.

## **1.2 Theoretical framing:**

In order to investigate the empirical question of how the UK energy market evolved towards the oligopolistic nature of the ‘big six’, when the stated intention of a far-reaching marketisation reform was to create a perfect structure of competition. I will pursue two institutionalist traditions, the first of which is a common one to organisation studies, the latter is, with the odd exception, external to this tradition. First, I will focus on neoinstitutional theory, this theoretical trope has gained much attention in organisational research, beginning with the question of how actors become institutionalised into sameness and conformity (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Neoinstitutional theory and, in particular, its more recent developments in the literatures of institutional logics and institutional work, offer a theoretical vocabulary that allows for the study of how organisations come to comply (or not) with

institutionalising pressures and incentives; with a particular focus on how logics change at the field-level and to explore the way in which actors intentionally work to create, maintain or destabilise institutional frames (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a; Greenwood *et al.*, 2011; Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca, 2011; Suddaby and Viale, 2011; Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012).

While neoinstitutional theory is therefore helpful in tracing the transmission of the market logic inside the institutional field (i.e. in relation to the actors of that field, including energy firms and regulators, amongst others), it does not readily allow for the consideration of the ideological realm. In my case, the ideological realm provided the stimulus and legitimating framework for the sector changes – and was also affected when the initial perceived success in the privatisation of British Gas legitimised further and more ambitious privatisation efforts. In order to account for these political elements I will turn to Cultural Political Economy (CPE).

According to the preface of book *Towards a cultural political economy: Putting culture in its place in political economy*; cultural political economy focuses more on the semiotic dimensions of political economy both as a field of inquiry and as social relations. Culture here is defined as ‘the ensemble of social processes by which meanings are produced, circulated and exchanged’ (Thwaites, Davis and Mules, 1994: 1). Thus the notion of semiosis and its sense- and meaning-making capabilities becomes vital conceptually and analytically for the interpretation and explanation of logics traditionally discussed in political economy, for example, the logic of capital accumulation and its relationality to social formations. I make particular use of the concepts of the ‘imaginary’, ‘hegemony’, ‘historical bloc’ and ‘intellectuals’ developed within this body of literature recognising the significance of the ethico-political (Gramsci, 1980; Jessop, 2009; Sum and Jessop, 2013; Olsaretti, 2014). My

approach thus resonates with the now often overlooked “old institutionalism” of Veblen, Polanyi, Commons and Schumpeter.

The aim of my study is to set these two traditions, the neoliberal market agenda presented by the UK government, and the institutionalisation of these ideals in organizational practice, into critical relation. My key concerns relate to the various ways in which ideological narratives were picked up, ignored, distorted or otherwise translated by institutional actors and how the interplay of the ideological and institutional logics afforded institutional actors scope to create and maintain the ensuing oligopolistic situation in spite of a policy agenda that precisely aimed to avoid such a market environment.

### **1.2.1 Institutional theory and the analysis of change:**

I begin my theoretical discussion with neoinstitutional theory as the foundational theoretical lens from which my research has developed. The last four to five decades have seen the institutionalist body of literature rise to prominence within the academic realm and debate. My discussion of neoinstitutional theory encompasses not only neo-institutionalism (which is widely discussed in the current organisation theory literature), but also an older tradition upon which neo-institutionalism builds, albeit often unacknowledged. There is a growing concern that whilst neo-institutionalism is broad in its range of coverage, there are still questions that remain unanswered concerning the true definition of an institution, how institutions change, and uncertainty surrounding the role of actors, agency and actions in processes of institutionalisation (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006; Suddaby, 2010; Suddaby, Foster and Mills, 2014).

Delving further into the recent institutional theory literature, I have found the bodies of literature discussing institutional logics and institutional work more comprehensive for the discussion of change. Logics have grown to become a central concept within institutional theory. Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury (2012: 2) describe institutional logics as

‘Socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences’.

Many studies focusing on institutional logics are concerned with the role these logics play in shaping organisational actions and outcomes and of the effect of the transition from one dominant logic to another (Gawer and Phillips, 2013).

Studies within the institutional logics literature broadly explore how logics are enacted upon and how they change. Much of this literature provides insight into how dominant logics cause organisations within a field become isomorphic (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), often leading to the assumption that logics guide the action and behaviour of actors causing their action to become ‘comprehensible and predictable’ (Lounsbury, 2002: 255). Whilst forming a compelling and widely used analytical frame, this view remains aligned to a rational-deductive approach of neo-institutionalism. More recently there has been an apparent interest in the multiplicity of institutional logics, particularly at the organisational field-level and the subsequent organisational responses to these changing field-level logics (Reay and Hinings, 2009; Greenwood *et al.*, 2010, 2011; Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012; Gawer and Phillips, 2013; Currie and Spyridonidis, 2016). My interest in the multiplicities



of institutional logics at the field-level and the way in which organisations respond to multiple and changing logics is relevant to the discussion of the privatisation of gas and electricity provision as much of the changes which occurred happened at the more general industry level as a result of policy-making.

Whilst organisations respond to changing field-level logics, they should not be considered as passive or submissive actors. Here emerges the need for the discussion of institutional work which is defined as ‘the purposive action of individuals and organisations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions’ (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 215). The mechanisms outlined here are active and draw my attention the effect of actions upon institutions and indeed, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) argue that studies in institutional work should be centred around three key elements relating to

‘The awareness, skill and reflexivity of individual and collective actors’ (219); to create an understanding of ‘institutions as constituted in the more or less conscious action of individual and collective actors’ (219); and finally, for those embarking on institutional work studies to realise that ‘we cannot step outside action as practice- even action which is aimed at changing the institutional order of an organizational field occurs within a set of institutionalized rules’ (220).

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) develop their perspective of institutional work from Jepperson’s (1991) definition of institutions as both the intentional and unintentional product of purposive action. Jepperson’s definition is crucial as it develops the perspective of institutions as passive constructions of meaning by participants, to viewing institutions as patterns of interaction supported by

mechanisms of control, thus institutions are the product of action with the aim of reproduction, change and destruction. What is key from this discussion is that agents are viewed as reflexive and capable beings, and as I will present empirically later within the thesis; this perspective allows me to attribute a richer role to agents within the discussion of the privatisation of the British energy sector.

Institutional theory offers a well-honed set of theoretical tools to study the ways in which institutional pressures translate into the homogenisation of organizational practices. The more recent research under the moniker of institutional logics and institutional work has turned attention to the processes by which agents intentionally work to effect institutional frames. This subset of the literature therefore allows for a more complex conception of organizational actors, not merely as institutional dupes, but as reflexive and political; working towards ends that exceed those imposed by institutional normalisation. Institutional logics and work will therefore allow me to address the question of how organisations and other actors in the energy market dealt with the changes to the institutional scripts brought by government reform (at the field-level) and how they translated, manipulated or dismissed elements of their institutional script.

There are evident benefits and uses of employing the institutional logics/work frameworks for the analysis of change. Institutional logics allow for the exploration of the general belief systems which enable individuals to interpret their world, whilst institutional work brings in the agency angle which is more concerned with the micro-foundations of institutions (Decker *et al.*, 2018). Whilst I do have a genuine interest in explaining and understanding change, I am specifically looking at change in a highly politicised industry. One of the more probing research questions within

this research pertains to the relations between politics, logics and organisational action and it is for this reason that I am exploring a very particular type of change that emanates from the wider political realm rather than a specific field or micro-foundation (or organisation). I am interested in institutional struggles and conflict, or more specifically legitimacy struggles.

Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) discuss legitimacy struggles as the moment by which legitimacy is assessed as appropriate or not during a period of shifting logics, whilst Stryker (2000:180) argues that 'legitimacy processes not only explain institutionalization and stability, but also help explain deinstitutionalization and change in organizations and organizational fields'. Further exploration of the way in which actors utilise their cognitive resources linked to and made available by the presence of multiple institutional logics is needed, this particularly holds true for highly politicised contexts wherein the individuals making decisions pertaining to major change are not fully aware of the requirements required for the reshaping of an energy market. I am interested in exploring the tools and resources actors utilise within their legitimising struggle to create a dominant logic (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006; Cloutier and Langley, 2013).

Given the time period in question (1979-2007) and the fact that the British energy markets were privatised under Thatcher's government, there is inevitably a heavy focus upon neoliberalism within this thesis. Neoliberalism, as I will argue later within this chapter and in this thesis more generally in chapter 3 and throughout my empirical data analysis, is an ideology acting as a set of guiding principles. This idea of guiding principles is not too far removed from the description of institutional logics offered by Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury (2012: 2) as 'cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals

and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity'. However, logics are not necessarily ideologies and are perhaps better understood through Weber's systems of domination which 'shapes our very preferences, attitudes and political outlook' (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 19; Hirsch and Lounsbury, 2015). Some work has been done to consider neoliberalism from an institutional logics perspective to understand how systems of dominance can be reconfigured and changed. Lounsbury and Tavakoly (2013) have explored how state logics began to challenge neoliberal logics within the context of stock markets after the financial crisis. The conclusion that is often reached within such work is that neoliberalism is highly resilient. This resilience is a phenomenon I am interested in exploring, particularly because what becomes evident is that within the time period in question (especially 1980-90), neoliberalism remains a dominant, albeit reconfigured, ideology. During this period I see various iterations of neoliberalism reconfigured in response to crises. Throughout these iterations, the role of actors is also key. Political and organisational actors are integral to institutional dynamics and contribute to institutional change and maintenance.

Finally, an issue which remains in the discussion of institutional logics and institutional work is the idea that whilst these two bodies of literature appear parallel and also insightful for one another, there still persists the issue of theoretical reconciliation (Zilber, 2013). Both streams of institutional theory have become dominant in their own right with their own distinct following and trajectory. Moreover, both cite their main goal as bridging the chasms that exist in institutional theory between structure and agency. Zilber (2013) comprehensively discusses these issues and I will explore some of her sentiments in chapter 2. For now, some of the key issues cited within this paper are that institutional logics perhaps try to capture

too many levels of analysis and that within the institutional work perspective it becomes difficult to actually distinguish what denotes institutional work and we run the risk of citing every act (great or small) by this term. Zilber (2013) argues that more attention needs to be paid to the scope of these two streams and that perhaps a more productive way to employ these frameworks is not to integrate them fully, but to move between each lens as and when discussion and analysis requires it. This movement between logics and work can be problematic; in my case, it remains difficult to account for the influence of politics and the specificities of ideology shaping institutions.

### **1.2.2 An extended approach to institutional theory:**

Above I have argued that my research question, aiming to understand the complex processes of change at the institutional but also the political level, can only be partially addressed through the institutional theory developed in Organisation and Management Studies. In order to pave the way for a more comprehensive theoretical framing of institutional and political aspects, I will therefore turn to another institutionalist tradition- Cultural Political Economy (CPE). As outlined earlier, CPE offers a semiotic reading of political economy, with a particular focus on sense- and meaning-making capabilities. This approach provides analytical frames for the study of ethico-political projects and regimes within a political economy context. In particular, I will elaborate selective elements of CPE with the aim of extending the institutionalist literature already discussed. My aim is therefore not to provide a comprehensive account of the vast literature on CPE but to focus on those elements that further the understanding of the political realm pertinent to my study. I especially learn from the authors Ngai-Ling Sum and Bob Jessop who have spent

several years honing their discussion of cultural and institutional turns in political economy. Their work in putting culture in its place within political economy adopts a critical realist view of the social world, strategic-relational approach (relating to structure and agency). What is central to both of these paradigms is the focus upon sense- and meaning- making (as discussed briefly earlier). For Sum and Jessop (2013: x) sense-making in semiosis is:

‘The apprehension of the natural and social world and meaning-making refers to ‘the process of signification and meaningful communication and it more closely related, but not restricted, to the production of linguistic meaning’.

Semiosis and its sense- and meaning-making capabilities are already inherent within the critical realist and strategic –relational paradigms, they are also to some extent present within neo-institutional theory, perhaps more specifically evident within institutional work and the idea that actors are not passive or submissive to institutions and institutional structures.

Given the ethico-political focus of this thesis, the discussion of conservative party politics and its close association to neoliberal ideologies becomes crucial, particularly within the empirical chapters. Neoliberalism itself is a heterogeneous set of institutions built upon a range of ideas, associated with market-oriented policy-making, and consists of ways of organising political and economic activity that are quite different from other ideologies (Dean, 2012). As such there are varying definitions and to some extent, ill-represented ideas of what a neoliberal ideology actually consists of. Amable (2010) argues that despite the prevalence of the term neoliberalism in a range of economically, politically and socially inclined debates; its

main characteristics are often misinterpreted. Neoliberalism is often associated with economic liberalism or a 'laissez-faire' approach; with prominent economists such as Joseph Stiglitz associating neoliberalism with markets and their capability to self-correct and allocate resources ultimately reducing neoliberalism to a form of 'market fundamentalism', with reduced state and public interventions (Stiglitz, 2008). It is important to highlight that there are several perspectives from which neoliberalism can be discussed. This partly contributes to its distortion, but also to its widespread use in academic discussion. Amable (2010: 7) summarises these points of view as:

'An ideology which legitimates individual competition and questions collective structure; it is a political project of institutional transformation, against any attempt to institute 'collectivism' and against the types of capitalism which had resulted from the various social-democratic compromises, in particular in post-war period, such as redistributive social protection, workers' collective rights or legal protection of employment and economic status.'

Furthering the ethos of individual competition and the questioning of collective structures, Harvey(2005: 2) discusses neoliberalism as a theory of political economic practices which argues that an individual's well-being is enhanced through entrepreneurial freedoms which are afforded by an 'institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade'. Within Harvey's definition of neoliberalism the state *does* have a role to play in upholding this institutional framework to ensure entrepreneurial freedom. In fact, the state has a pivotal role to play with regards to the creation of markets where if 'markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, healthcare, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be

created, by state action if necessary' (Harvey, 2005: 2). It is only when these markets are created is it argued that state intervention must be minimal because (according to neoliberal theory), they cannot possess greater information than a market and it is likely that where state intervention does occur, powerful individuals or groups are likely to distort these interventions for their own benefit (Harvey, 2005). What must be acknowledged in outlining the perspective(s) of neoliberalism is that it is not an ideology limited to the politics of the conservative right, but it is an ideology which can also be found in the 'modern' left (Amable, 2010: 4). The modern left here is what Giddens (1994) would refer to as the Third Way, or in the context in this research, New Labour which becomes important to my discussion of the late 1980s and 1990s.

CPE offers a set of defining features and tools which enable me to explore salient aspects of neoliberalism, particularly the way in which neoliberalism manifested within my period of interest. Specifically, I will draw on Sum and Jessop (2013)'s elaboration of the concept of the "imaginary". The imaginary is introduced in their discussion of cultural turns in political economy and to some extent, as a critique of institutional turns. Where the term institutions denotes the discussion of 'regularizing expectations and conduct within and across different social spheres' (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 29), the imaginary forces a discussion more sympathetic to understanding semiotic systems that shape and guide lived experience, whilst better capturing the complexities of the world we live in. Both institutions and imaginaries act as a set of mechanisms and both can be productively discussed in conjunction with one another to offer an extended institutional approach

The cultural political economy discussion offered by Sum and Jessop (2013) also allows for critical engagement with the work of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci



critiques the way in which classical economists treated markets as eternal and universal and as being too limited in scope. Instead he attests to the argument that markets should be redefined in order to capture their ‘historical specificity of economic forms, institutions, and dynamics’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 84; Gramsci, 1971). The discussion of markets in a neoliberal sense are important for this research as I will empirically explore the way in which the British energy industry experienced a transition from a nationalised market of operation, to a more competitive (and what could be considered a neoliberal) self-regulating market which relies on market mechanisms, competitive practices and efficiency. Here, the Gramscian concepts of hegemony, intellectuals (organic and traditional) and the historical bloc are of great use as they allow me to explore further explore the historical contingency and complexities of markets, as well as providing me with the tools to better understand key actors and their role in the legitimising and delegitimising processes.

Together, the four elements taken from CPE, the imaginary; hegemony; intellectuals and historical blocks from the extension of the institutional framework that allows me to consider the changes in the UK energy market, taking into account both institutional and wider cultural-political aspects. Moreover, I will translate the methodological tool of periodisation from CPE to the study of institutional change. The benefits of this extension lie in the possibility of comparing the connections and disconnections between these theoretical accounts and between the empirical interplay of political ideal(s), their uptake and translation into institutional realities. This project of extension requires careful examination of the differences that underlie both institutional and CPE approaches including, inter alia, the status of individuals (as institutional agents vs. intellectuals), accounts of hegemony and counter-

hegemony and the generative mechanisms which contribute to the production of hegemony.

### **1.3 Research aim and objectives:**

The empirical aim of this research is to better understand the change that occurred in the British energy industry from 1980-2000. There is an abundance of research concerning this sector. Many of the articles written during the time Thatcher was in power, and neoliberal policies of privatisation and deregulation of the energy sector that were being rolled out, relate to issues concerning the options for the organisations within this industry. The various policies that were discussed at the time and also discussion of privatisation and the reasons for market liberalisation (often in comparison with other countries experiencing neoliberalism and privatisation, i.e. Reagan and neoliberalism in the USA) (Hammond, Helm and Thompson, 1985; Webb, 1985; Burton, 1987, 1997; Puxty, 1997). More recent articles focus upon the changes in general, often providing an overview of the shifts that occurred. Where institutions are discussed, literature focused upon the energy sector in Britain serves to highlight government institutions and their interactions with regulators (To name a few: Helm, 2002, 2003; Gabriele, 2004; Thomas, 2006). This providing a very limited view on the complex change, predominantly focused upon the more technical aspects of the changes which occurred. With this in mind, the overarching question which motivated this research is to *explain and understand the changes that occurred in the British energy Market during (and to some extent, after) privatisation*. In order to fully explore this question, I will break it down into the following more theoretically driven questions:

The first research question (RQ) relates to changes on the institutional level. The institutional logics and work frameworks provide a toolkit for the investigation of field-level logics and intentional acts of those working within institutional fields. This research questions thus reads as-

**(RQ1)** What were the changing institutional logics and how were these changes enacted by key players within the market?

The related sub research questions which guide the literature review in chapter 2 and empirical discussion in chapter 5 are

*(a) What were the changing institutional logics at the exchange field level?*

*(b) How did organisations respond to and initiate changing logics at the field level?*

The second RQ refers to the political realm and is where my study begins to differentiate itself from traditional neo-institutional scholarship, wherein I employ the CPE toolkit to elicit key processes and players in that realm. The question is:

**(RQ2)** What imaginaries are present during the privatisation of the British energy sector and which imaginary is hegemonic?

Specifically, RQ2 allows me to further explore the background of individuals and their relation to the changes which occurred during the privatisation of the energy markets, and thus prompts a more strategic-relational discussion of structure and agency in the process of change. The related sub research questions which guide the literature review in chapter 3 and empirical discussion in chapter 6 are:

*(a) How did this imaginary come into being?*

*(b) How does an imaginary change and evolve?*

*(c) How can an imaginary be translated into policy and legislation?*

RQ2 demands probing into the political processes at that time. However, this poses significant challenges for this study in terms of scale and scope given the sheer volume of information that is of relevance. Empirically, whilst I will draw on some archival data here to include specific elements of Thatcherite ideology and policy, my investigation is aided by the existing work on that period (secondary data).

Finally, RQ3 synthesises both previous approaches on the institutional and the cultural political economic level and is as follows:

**(RQ3)** What are the connections and/or disconnections in the theoretical and empirical accounts of neo-institutional and cultural political economy frameworks?

RQ3 requires the task of bridging two conceptual lenses that are not necessarily aligned. The final research question provides shape for the entire research project. As my research interest lies predominantly in the relationships between the political and the institutional realm, the purpose of the first two research questions is not to provide an exhaustive study of either the processes within British Gas, nor of the Conservative privatisation process. Rather, it is aimed at providing data that allow me to trace links between the institutional and the political realms and so demonstrate the utility of the extended institutionalist approach that I develop in this thesis.

#### **1.4 Methodological considerations:**

Owing to the historic nature of the case, dissertation engages with methodological aspects of historical research. In chapter 4, I engage with the debate concerning the uses and treatment of the past and the value of historical studies for organisation and management literature. Prominent authors within institutional theory, as well as organisational literature more generally, have discussed not only the importance of historical data and methods, but also pointed to potential limitations when compared with other qualitative research methods (to name a few: Clark and Rowlinson (2004); Suddaby, Foster and Quinn Trank (2010); Decker, (2013, 2014); Bucheli and Wadhvani (2014); Decker, Kipping and Wadhvani (2015); Suddaby (2016).

More recently Wadhvani *et al.*(2018) curated a special issue in Organization Studies solely concerned with uses of the past within organisation studies with a range of historical methods and historical research contexts wherein the past is utilised differently were explored (Basque and Langley, 2018; Blagoev, Felten and Kahn, 2018; Lubinski, 2018; Oertel and Thommes, 2018). Furthermore there has recently been a special issue within the Business History Journal concerning historical research and institutional change specifically aimed at addressing the ‘gap’ in our understanding of the way in which historical research can contribute to our understanding of institutional change (Decker *et al.*, 2018). Interestingly, this special issue specifically addresses institutional logics and institutional work as focal strands of institutional theory literature, and the papers within the special issue seek to address the tensions between these two strands of institutionalism (Butzbach, 2018; Chacar, Celo and Hesterly, 2018; Popielarz, 2018; Seppälä, 2018; Thompson, 2018; Wadhvani, 2018). With a continued, and to some extent renewed, concern with

historical research methods, I aim to not only situate my own research within this ever-growing body of literature, but also to continue to contribute to this literature through the introduction of a wider set of units of analysis drawing from both institutional and CPE domains and, in particular, the use of periodisation across these domains.

The main form of data analysis within this dissertation is document analysis of archival data (Bowen, 2009), white papers, key media sources and key speeches often given by Thatcher to give some indication of the general state of Britain at the time, and to also help direct the discussion of the periodisation of Thatcherism as an imaginary. To develop my methodology, I investigate archival research methods in more depth. I explore positive aspects of utilising archival research methods, as well as some of the reported weaknesses. Within this discussion, I explore notions of source criticism and contextualisation which aid methodological clarity, reliability and validity of the data collected in the production of historical narratives (Gill, Gill and Roulet, 2018; Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). The analytical protocol provides an overview of the data source as in how and which archival material I collected. This protocol thus includes the archives I visited, a synopsis of these archives covering the narrative they (archives) are built around and the curation/curators of the archives. I also detail the parameters and procedures employed during data collection, providing a reflection of my experiences (detailed in a research diary) and explaining the relativity of the archive to my research.

Within this dissertation, I employ periodisations as a tool for analysis. Periodisation refers to the organisation of phenomena into coherent time periods and they can vary in their duration (Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014). A periodisation can cover various spans of time; short term periodisations tend to focus

upon actors and agency whilst longer term periodisation tends to study structures and the way in which structures shape action (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). Within this thesis, I employ a multi-decade style periodisation which considers social structures and social institutions in the process of change (Baumol, 1996). A multi-decade approach to periodisations allows for the exploration of the multi-layered and complex causes and processes of change which occur over multiple and concurrent time-scales with the involvement of multiple actors at various levels of analysis (Ingram, Rao and Silverman, 2012). Periodisation becomes particularly important within chapter 6 where I discuss Thatcherism in relation to the concept of the economic imaginary. My use of periodisations is threefold. Firstly, it acts as a method in that it guides my data collection, analysis and discussion. Secondly, it allows for the discussion of time in linear clock fashion, but also in terms of other temporalities with a moment or period in history being dynamic rather than static and in the past. Finally, periodisation has assisted me in establishing my perspective on historical reality, allowing for the illumination of the subjective realities imposed upon phenomena, e.g. the various ways in which Thatcherism as a form of neoliberal theory can be periodised. This makes way for my presentation of a periodisation of Thatcherism in direct relation to the energy industry later in the empirical chapters. Thus, whilst the periodisation acts as analytical tool, it also later becomes a product of my analysis.

### **1.5 Findings and contributions:**

By combining features from institutional theory and a cultural political economy, I will contribute to the understanding of the interrelations of wider cultural, political and economic forces and institutional change processes.

Understanding the changes in the UK energy sector requires the mapping out this sector further to better understand the institutional fields within which organisations are located and where contestation and competing institutional logics or competing hegemonies occur. The second part of the empirical story demonstrates the added value of the extended framework developed. It shows that while institutional change can be rapid and turbulent, policy-making may appear broadly unidirectional and stable. I find that whilst the intellectuals are concerned with creating efficiently competitive markets as per neoliberal thought, there are often greater battles regarding issues of ownership within institutional structures. My aim in this thesis is not to dismiss institutional logics or institutional work as frameworks for analysis. More so, I aim to shed light on their utility but also to argue that their exclusion of the political realm does not allow for the analysis of the complexities of institutional changes involving large-scale events on the level of political ideology, such as in the case of the UK energy market. The contribution of this work therefore lies in the bridging of these conceptual domains of institutionalism (Zilber, 2013).

The primary challenge, as well as contribution of this thesis lies in demonstrating the complementarity of conceptual frameworks of neo-institutionalism and CPE. The challenges and contributions are, however, also empirical, attaining, selecting between, and interpreting vast sets of data on one of the largest UK organisations at the time. As well as the project of privatisation, with wide-ranging political debates as well as far-reaching and complex documentation of resulting policy changes, the creation and work of regulating bodies, the press, the processes of shareholder creation and the like. This dissertation will include substantial discussions of the theoretical elements of both areas of inquiry before moving to analysis and synthesis of the empirical data, which I will pursue, with the aim of



eliciting the patterns between these domains. This work thus contributes theoretically to the institutional literature by offering various tools from which the discussion of structure and agency within institutional change can be reconciled and thereby recovering aspects of the old institutionalism. The historical data utilised in this thesis also allows for the engagement with key debates within organisation studies concerning uses of the past and issues relating to time and temporality.

## **Chapter 2: Institutional Theory and Organisational Change**

This chapter will review literature on neo-institutional theory in order to start constructing the analytical framework for addressing the first theoretical research question: *What were the changing institutional logics and how were these changes enacted by key players within the market?* My aim is not to provide an exhaustive review of neo-institutional theory *per se*, but to critically review institutional approaches to elicit theorisations of how institutional processes can be understood, particularly the institutionalisation of logics through legitimation or delegitimation by actors. This includes the nature of actors involved, the processes by which actors are ‘institutionalised’ and the key mechanisms by which institutional change occurs. I will pay particular attention to agentic aspects in these processes in order to see to which degree institutional theory can account for and/or cover political actors and their agendas as well as organizational agents. I will equally present a review of the outlook on structure within neo-institutional theory to determine how this literature is equipped to identify the institutional structures which constrain (or not) the actions of institutional actors, paying attention to the various fields within which organisations operate and are embedded within. The aim of this chapter is to identify the key units of analysis and relations that allow for the analysis of institutional changes as well as the limits of these frameworks for studying the interrelations of the institutional and political elements that constitute the case of the British Energy market.

This chapter focuses on two key areas of neo-institutional literature: institutional logics as an analytical framework for understanding changing and multiple institutional logics and, second, organisational responses to these (changing)

logics (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a; Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012). The review of institutional logics will elaborate how far the existing (published) work addresses the research question 1(a) *what were the changing institutional logics at the exchange field level?*

The second key area I will focus on is institutional work (Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca, 2009; Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca, 2011). This serves to explore the research question 1(b) *How did organisations respond to changing logics at the field level?* To further address these sub-questions, I will probe the literature concerning the multiplicity of institutional logics at the field-level (Greenwood *et al.*, 2010), as well as providing some discussion concerning the historicity and temporal capabilities of institutional logics and institutional work (Clemente, Durand and Roulet, 2017).

This chapter is thus organised as follows. I will begin with a brief review of neo-institutional theory and organisational analysis to both provide some history of the approach and to better situate my research within this school of thought. I will then provide a more focused discussion of institutional logics and its meta-theoretical principles, logics and field-level change and finally the capacity of institutional logics as an analytical framework for organisational analysis. Institutional work is then explored to provide a conceptual framework for a deeper focus on the agent within institutional change. This chapter also discusses institutional logics and institutional work in conjunction with one another and the various issues in reconciling these approaches (Suddaby, 2010; Zilber, 2013). Finally, I explore some of the challenges for the institutional approach in analysing organisational change. These key challenges pertain to the fact that change did not just occur at the organisational level; they occurred at a wider macro political level

and at the market level. The issue of change in privatisation of my focal industries is a multi-layered issue.

## **2.1 Key concepts and developments in organisational institutionalism:**

The goal of this section is to trace the history of organisational institutionalism, to take stock of the underlying principles of institutionalism and the ways in which these principles have evolved, disappeared, or given rise to new directions of thought and analysis. Tracing this history is significant for my work as it serves to highlight several ambiguities and points of contention, which exist in strands of neo-institutionalism. The foundational concepts of institutionalism that are commonly discussed today were established through the works of (Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1983), Zucker (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Meyer and Scott (1983). It is worth noting that whilst these key works are commonly discussed as the beginning of the modern organisational institutionalism, institutions and institutional processes have been discussed prior to the 1970s.

Hirsch (2013) outlines his own introduction to the term ‘institution’ as emanating from Parsons' (1956) discussion concerning three levels of analysis in studying organisations; the firm’s technical level, the managerial level and the institutional level. The first of these levels occurs through work done within the organisation at the technical level; this pertaining to work that contributes to the productivity and effectiveness of the firm. The managerial level relates to the way in which the technical is coordinated and the final level of analysis occurs outside the firm through laws and regulation at the institutional level. These laws and regulations are then applied within markets and external environments (Parsons, 1956; Hirsch, 2013). Parsons' (1956) work did not view the organisation as a closed system and

took into account agents within the political economy (e.g. trade unions, regulatory bodies and the state) (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008). This open system perspective of the organisation perhaps stemming from his sociology background and interests in social action and structural-functional analysis wherein components which contribute to the structures of a social system are interrelated and interact within one another (Parsons, 1937). Parson's work changed the way in which the discussion of organisational fields developed to embody an open system perspective. This gave rise to the discussion which not only questioned the way in which a firm's external environment influenced behaviour, but it gave rise to the consideration of the ways in which organisations could influence and change regulation and law (Thompson, 1967). The two-way relationship between the internal workings of the firm and its external environment are crucial as it takes into consideration the notion that organisations can be influenced by external factors, and vice versa. Organisations were not viewed as autonomous, but rather, they existed in an environment that could constrain them, but were also capable of 'beating the system' so to speak, they were perceived as being able to develop strategies which could bypass market forces (Hirsch, 2013).

The late 1970s perspective of organisational theory was largely dominated by the idea that organisation were simply agentic actors which responded to various situational circumstances (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008). In the mid-1970s, the term 'institution' was typically not considered to be a theory, rather it continued to be referred to as a level at which political action which allowed for change occurred (Parsons, 1956; Hirsch, 2013). Much of the mid-1970s saw interest in a variety of theories from structural-contingency theory, resource-dependence theory and ecological theory (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008). Each of these theories presented a focus

upon the relationship between an organisation and its environment and the way organisations adapted to (or attempted to adapt to) their environment to achieve the appropriate 'fit'.

It was against this backdrop that Meyer and Rowan's (1977) work 'Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony' emerged, eventually becoming the cornerstone for institutional discussion of organisations. Meyer and Rowan remained interested in the rational aspect of formal bureaucracy and paid particular attention to networks of organisation and exchange as well as the institutional context (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008). Meyer and Rowan suggest that organisations are influenced by their institutional context (or rationalised myths) that defined what it meant to be rational. Extending their initial ideas, Meyer and Rowan (1983: 84) went on to define the institutional context as 'the rules, norms, and ideologies of the wider society'. Others contributed to the discussion of organisations and the institutional environment with Zucker (1983: 105) elaborating the 'common understandings of what is appropriate and, fundamentally, meaningful behaviour' and Scott (1983: 163) offering insights into 'normative and cognitive belief systems'.

The foundational elements of the institutional framework developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s emphasised that organisations are influenced by their institutional and network contexts, and that institutionalised context is comprised of rationalised myths, which continually cajole organisations into conformity. While institutional pressures affect all organisations, some organisations show specific sensitivity to their institutional context and thus become institutionalised. But rather than conceiving of sameness as a limiting factor, organisations can gain from such 'isomorphic' alignment because this can afford legitimacy, and efficiency when

acting in concert with the modus operandi of other participants in the institutional landscape, leading to institutionalised practices becoming increasingly often taken-for-granted and so come to be widely accepted and resilient or resistant to change (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008).

Meyer and Rowan (1977) discuss institutional environments and individual organisational responses to the rules and requirements of said environments. The discussion of institutional environments is rooted in the notion that the structure of an organisation will reflect the socially constructed reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). This sentiment is echoed in Parsons' (1956) earlier work relating to open systems where organisations are conditioned by their wider institutional environments, but are also institutions in their own right. Where Meyer and Rowan (1977) illuminate the notion of myths and ceremony, organisations are not as distinct as in the open system, instead they are perceived as enactments of rational myths in societies. What is consistent about these two perspectives is that organisations have some relationship with their external environments which have influence upon their structures (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) develop this idea of the institutional environment further and elaborate upon the organisational field, which consist of sets of organisations. These sets of organisations consist of multiple members from suppliers, consumers, regulators or other organisations who are geared towards producing similar products or services (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Through these sets of organisations, we begin to see the rise of the concept of the organisational field. The organisational field provides a form of context for organisations to rationally deal with uncertainty. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that upon the emergence of a set of organisations, the field remains fairly heterogeneous in terms

of form and practice, it is not until this field becomes more established that homogeneity occurs. Fields only exist once they are institutionally defined process defined as structuration.

Whilst the consideration of conformity and isomorphism amongst organisation within institutional environments began with Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Scott (1983), one of the most widely cited papers in organisation institutionalism which deals with the notions of convergence and isomorphism is DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) 'The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationalist in organizational fields'. In this paper, the authors question why such a high degree of organisational homogeneity existed both within organisational forms and within practices. Their conclusion was that this homogeneity was a result of the structuration of organisational fields wherein 'powerful forces emerge that lead [organizations] to become similar to one another' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 148). Here, a difference emerges in the writing of Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983).

DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) work has been influential within the institutional realm, it is work which is often utilised as a scapegoat for the discussion of what is wrong with organisational institutionalism. Greenwood *et al.* (2008: 6) raise this point, suggesting that the issue lies in the way in which DiMaggio and Powell framed their work highlighting that it was 'often misinterpreted by later researchers, who treated homogeneity as synonymous within institutional isomorphism, when in fact homogeneity is only one possible effect of institutional pressures'. Perhaps with hindsight this issue lies with the imagery the 'iron cage' provokes. The image of the iron cage originates with Weber's notion of the 'iron cage of modernity' and theory of rationality. Weber's notion is 'usually associated



with large government bureaucracies, which produce and endless stream of rules and regulations, and force the individual to live up to well-defined expectations' (Hoogenboom and Ossewaarde, 2005: 601).

The most widely utilised contribution of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) article relates to the process of institutionalisation. The authors propose three mechanisms of diffusion: coercive, normative and mimetic. Coercive isomorphism typically occurs where 'organizations are motivated to avoid sanctions available to organizations on which they are dependent' (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008: 7). Normative isomorphism occurs where organisations are socially motivated and respect any social obligations and mimetic isomorphism occurred where organisations are influenced by and interpreted the success of other organisations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

The years following these initial publications saw limited empirical discussion and analysis of the ideas put forward by the likes of Meyer and Rowan (1977), Zucker (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983). In fact, the term 'institutional' remained relatively undefined during the late 1970s and 1980s, with authors referring to studies with an institutional inclination as exploring 'organisational homogeneity theory' (Fligstein, 1985: 377) or simply, legitimation (Galaskiewicz, 1985). During the 1980s, the work of Meyer and Rowan was perhaps more widely picked up outside of North America and was particularly developed by Swedish scholars who presented some of the key early institutional ideas empirically. Brunsson (1985) is an example of this empirical endeavour wherein the author's work focused upon examining whether idea of modernisation had any effect upon the operational practices of organisations. Scandinavian researchers were also amongst the first to present research which dealt with the idea that organisations were subject

to multiple and contradictory institutional expectations, Brunsson (1989) was one of the first to label this as ‘organisational hypocrisy’ wherein organisations would ‘talk’ in one way and ‘act’ in another to cope with contradictory pressures placed upon them.

During the 1980s the diversity of the institutional thesis grew in various forms (but mostly adopted the notion rationalised myths in some form). (Greenwood *et al.*(2008) recognise four sets of studies that explored institutions as rationalised myths: processual studies, cross-category comparison, cross-national comparison and means of transmission. Perhaps the most significant set is described as the processual which ‘demonstrated that organizations are motivated to achieve legitimacy by adopting practices widely believed to be rational’ (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008: 8). The more processual institutional thesis was initiated by Tolbert and Zucker (1983) who studied the diffusion of civil service employment practices across local US governments. A key finding of this study was that diffusion of practices occurred in a two-stage model, each stage outlining certain motivations for the adoption of organisational practices. The first stage often includes the motivation by the prospect of the improvement of operations, whilst the second stage set out to secure social legitimation. This study was significant as it was one of the first large-scale (quantitative) studies of the historical analysis of institutional effects, focusing upon the cognitive forms of legitimacy (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008).

Fligstein (1987) explored the backgrounds of individuals in high-ranking positions in large corporations, and the way in which their positions changed over a course of 60 years. Fligstein’s work explored the mimetic diffusion of institutionalisation. Three features of his work stand out as significant for the subsequent development of the institutional thesis. Firstly, Fligstein (1987) links

control to the power struggles of organisational and intra-organisational power struggles. Secondly, he begins to move away from the use of the terms rationalised myths and legitimacy to instead discusses the way in which ideas become accepted within an organisational field and how they influence the adoptions of specific organisational strategies and structures (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008). Finally, Fligstein (1987) began to move away from the more rationalised discussion of institutional processes and opened up the study of institutional processes to any aspect of organisational forms. This publication signal a move away from the widely accepted two stage model of change to begin to explore the exogenous-shock model which became widely accepted within organisational institutionalism for the following two decades (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008).

By the end of the 1980s, the diversities and ambiguities of institutional thesis were becoming more apparent and criticisms began to emerge of the lack of empirical attention given to certain aspects of institutionalisation. Specifically, critique of the notion of isomorphism was on the rise and several studies reported that not all organisations responded in the same way to institutional processes. Questions of ‘if isomorphism obtains, how then are we to explain the apparent variety of organizations that nonetheless are co-exist within industries...?’ (Fombrun, 1989: 439). This type of question illustrates the confusion and misinterpreted adoption of the term isomorphism discussed earlier in this section and signifies the emergence of the focus upon discord within institutional environments. Ambiguities also emerged over the nature of institutional explanation. Baron, Davis-Blake and Bielby's (1986) study encompassed institutional explanations and explored the mimetic, coercive and normative mechanisms offered by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), but explored the term ‘institution’ in two ways. Firstly, institutions were

viewed as models that are consistent with the way in which Meyer and Rowan (1977) discussed institutions. Secondly, Baron, Davis-Blake and Bielby(1986) discuss institutions as regulatory agency and policies (Green, Babb and Alpaslan, 2008; Greenwood *et al.*, 2008). These two differing interpretations of the term institution signify the divergent discussion of institutional analysis, the former adhering to guiding work of Meyer and Rowan (1977) and the latter signifying what would become known as ‘new-institutionalism’ (Ingram and Silverman, 2002).

The end of the 1980s represent a shift in focus again; DiMaggio (1988) called for the incorporation of agency in institutional theory to ask questions relating to the way in which new organisations were legitimised, questioning who actually had the power to legitimise these new organisational forms. This line of questioning gave rise to the conceptualisation of the role of the agent driving change. The rise to the discussion of the institutional entrepreneur which has been built upon since by authors such as Maguire, Hardy and Lawrence (2004) and Greenwood and Suddaby (2006) and has become synonymous with the institutional change. With the early 1990s we see the introduction of institutional logics which is commonly discussed as beginning with the work of Friedland and Alford (1991). This strand of institutionalism focused upon institutional change and the way in which core institutions which have potentially incompatible logics create the potential dynamic for change to occur.

It is here I will conclude the history of organisational institutionalism as my focus for the rest of this chapter will lie on institutional logics, institutional fields and institutional work. What has become ever more apparent through writing this review of the key concepts and developments of organisational institutionalism is that diversity which has been addressed by Suddaby (2010) and Lawrence, Leca and

Zilber (2013) has deeper roots in this school of thought. To some extent it has always been a polarising discipline that has succumbed to trends, or favoured one context over another (much like many theories of its kind which are taken up and employed by a diverse group of scholars). It is interesting however that many of the facets discussed in the early years in the 1970s-1990s are still prevalent in institutional logics and institutional work. These strands of neo-institutionalism have emerged as distinct in their own right, but still continue to embody some of the limitations, ambiguities and contentions expressed by its predecessors. What is more, it will become apparent throughout this chapter and the next that some of the more overlooked and lost features of organisational institutionalism, such as the concern with interests of the elites and their influence upon organisational forms and practices outlined by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) become crucial to my own research, discussion and analysis and will later bring into question whether institutional logics and institutional work, with their respective analytical frameworks, have the capability to theorise political pressures on institutional structure and agency despite possessing the capabilities to discuss political elements..

## **2.2 Institutional logics and organisational change:**

Having elaborated key precursors outlined a history of organisational institutionalism; the following section (and the rest of this chapter) will focus current trends of the neo-institutional domain relevant to the research question linking macro-political and institutional domains. I will begin with an overview of institutional logics, its origins, meta-theoretical elements and applications. Given the focus of institutional logics upon institutional change and the creation of the dynamics which make change possible; it is a useful starting point in my

institutionally inclined discussion of the processes of privatisation in British energy from the 1980s and the way in which new and competing logics emerged during this time period.

Institutional logics have grown to become a central concept within institutional theory. This theoretical framework and the resulting empirical research agendas have evolved somewhat since conception and use in academic literature. The term 'institutional logics' originates with Alford and Friedland's (1985) description of the contradictory nature of practices and beliefs within institutions present in modern western societies. The inception of the term is ascribed to the discussion of the variation of practices and beliefs of institutional orders such as capitalism, state bureaucracy and political democracy as shaping the way in which individuals engage in political struggles. Friedland and Alford (1991) developed their discussion of logics further through a critique of neo-institutional theory suggesting its failure to situate actors within a social context. Friedland and Alford elaborate a theory of institutions that includes both individuals and organisations, arguing that society and social relations are not solely about the diffusion of material structures, but also relate to symbolic and cultural elements. This represents a critique of rational choice theory by highlighting that rationality, and the meaning of rationality itself, varies across institutional orders.

The original formulation of institutional logics by Friedland and Alford (1991) rejects macro structural perspectives, arguing that an institutional order has its own guiding logic which serves to organise principles and offers social actors an identity. Moreover, the original formulation of institutional logics posited that actors are not passive. In fact these logics mean that practices and symbols are present to be

manipulated by individuals and organisations for their own benefit (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a).

In developing institutional logics as a framework for analysis, Thornton and Ocasio (1999) sought to build upon Friedland and Alford's original discussion of logics, resulting in the development of institutional logics as a major field of research in the 2000s (Zilber, 2013). Thornton and Ocasio (1999: 804) define institutional logics as:

‘The socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality.’

This definition implies that institutional logics offers a link between agency, cognition practice and rule structures. Breaking this definition down further, four key principles of the institutional logics perspective can be outlined. The first is the interest in the integration of structure and agency, the second relates to the material and symbolic elements of logics, the third recognises that institutions are historically contingent and, the final one considers how institutions exist across various social levels (Zilber, 2013).

Institutional logics allow for the discussion of the way in which individuals, organisations and other members of institutional fields are influenced by their situation at different locations within an interinstitutional system with different institutional orders. From the logics perspective, these institutional orders include family, religion, state, market, professions and corporation. As a theoretical model, each institutional order of an interinstitutional system is characterised by unique

organising principles, practices and symbols which are historically contingent and thus have an effect on individual and organisational behaviour (Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012). Thornton and Ocasio (2008) describe these elements as the meta-theory, or perhaps more specifically the ontology, of institutional logics in which they deduce that there are five: embedded agency; society as an inter-institutional system; the material and cultural foundations of institutions; Institutions at multiple levels; and historical contingency. These elements ‘shape heterogeneity, stability and change in individuals and organizations’ (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008: 103).

Variation in the institutional logics framework is largely a result of the various ways in which this meta-theory has been employed and in some cases, where all the elements of the meta-theory have not been employed (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a).

I will offer a discussion of each aspect of what is described as the meta-theory of institutional logics in the following sub-sections.

### **2.2.1 Embeddedness:**

The first of the meta-theoretical elements of institutional logics I will discuss is presented by Thornton and Ocasio (2008) as embedded agency. Given that one of the central objectives of institutional logics is to discuss and analyse institutional change, the inclusion of embedded agency goes some way (although not far enough as I will highlight throughout this chapter) in speaking to and attempting to overcome the issue of the marginalisation of institutional work expressed by DiMaggio (1988). Foundational to institutional logics is the notion that ‘interests, identities, values and assumptions of individuals and organisations are embedded within prevailing institutional logics’ (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008: 103). This makes institutional logics distinguishable from macro structural approaches which give primacy to



structure over action or agency and further removes the institutional logics approach from the more rational perspectives of institutions, which privileges individualistic interests (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a).

Scott (2008) defines agency as an actor's ability to have some impact on the social world, whether that be in relation to rules, relations or resources. Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury (2012) develop this notion of agency, as well as other orienting strategies that deal with the problem of agency and structure, and highlight the foundation from which institutional logics were built. By presenting these theoretical and analytical developments, I highlight one of the key distinguishing characteristics of institutional logics as an approach that incorporates theoretical mechanisms that explain the (partial) autonomy of actors from social structure. From the logics perspective, it is this (partial) autonomy that allows for the explanation of the way in which institutions constrain and enable individuals and organisations, and thus creating a theory for institutional stability and change (Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012).

The principle of embedded agency is described as 'the core assumption of the institutional logics approach' (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008: 103). This embeddedness relates to the goals of an individual or an organisation for power and economic advantage, and how these goals could be constrained or enabled by institutional logics. Thornton and Ocasio (2008:104) argue that society consists of three levels: "individuals competing and negotiating, organisations in conflict and coordination, and institutions in contradictions and interdependency". It would be wrong to privilege one level over another as individuals and organisations are embedded within institutions, and conversely said individuals and organisations socially construct institutions.

The issue of privileging one level over another, both empirically and theoretically is not restricted to studies employing the thinking of Friedland and Alford (1991) and Thornton and Ocasio (2008). Other strands of institutionalism have discussed multiple levels in analysis in a stronger and more conscious fashion. For instance Battilana(2006) calls attention to the notion of the paradox of embedded agency and critiques neo-institutionalists for their continued lack of concern with human agency. Battilana (2006) argues that the attention given to the level of individual analysis has paled in comparison to that of the organisational and societal levels and that in reality; actors also have the ability to shape organisations and institutions. Even when comparing this notion of embedded agency to the definition of agency offered by Scott (2008) as actors having the ability to have some impact on their surroundings; the use of the term embedded within a logics meta-theory implies actors are passive within the process of institutional change. This paradox of embedded agency also directs our attention to one of the main points of contention between institutional logics and institutional work. In reviewing this paradox, I first need to discuss the way in which Friedland and Alford (1991) privilege society and the way in which their view of society as an inter-institutional systems and institutions at multiple levels have been incorporated into the institutional logics meta-theory.

### **2.2.2 Inter-institutional systems and institutions at multiple levels**

This section will outline Thornton and Ocasio's (2008) discussion of society as an inter-institutional system and of institutions at multiple levels of analysis. I do

so as these elements are deemed fundamental to understanding institutional logics and categorises of knowledge which contribute to sources of heterogeneity and agency. In viewing society as an inter-institutional system, I am able to understand the variation in the expectations of different societal sectors and in organisational behaviour.

One of the main foundations upon which the institutional logics perspective is built is Friedland and Alford's (1991) conceptualisation of society as an inter-institutional system. In theorising society in this way, agency is located in a variety of social sectors, each with own perception and expectations of social relations, as well as individual and organisational behaviour (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a). In their original work, Friedland and Alford (1991) identified five of these varying societal sectors<sup>1</sup> as the capitalist market, the bureaucratic state, democracy, family and religion. The goal of outlining these different societal sectors and viewing society as an inter-institutional system was to draw attention to possibility of the existence of different sources of heterogeneity and for agency to be discussed and analysed from the perspective that contradictions between these sectors are inherent, which ultimately results in contradictions in the logics in these different institutional orders (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). I am also reviewing these societal sectors as they will feature in my neo-institutional empirical chapter (chapter 5), in particular, I will focus upon the capitalist market, the bureaucratic state and corporations in my analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Thornton later developed this typology to include six sectors: Markets, corporations, professions, states, families and religions (Thornton, 2004)

In discussing institutions in this way, Friedland and Alford's (1991) theorisation did go some way in moving beyond the earlier institutional thesis of presenting one source of rationality (Meyer and Rowan, 1977), to embrace the notion of multiple sources of heterogeneity. The logics approach posits that in fact any context is susceptible to the influence of multiple logics from different societal sectors (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). Thus, conceiving of an inter-institutional system allows researchers to understand the categories of knowledge, which underpin institutions. Friedland and Alford (1991: 260) argue that

‘Categories of knowledge contribute to and yet depend upon the power of institutions which make them possible. Without understanding the historical and institutional specificity of the primacy categories of analysis, social scientists run the risk of elaborating the rationality of institutions they study, and as a result become actors in reproduction.’

In understanding the categories of knowledge which underpin institutions, concepts such as efficiency, rationality and values are shaped by the logics of the inter-institutional system.

Thornton and Ocasio (2008) argue that the institutional logics approach as a meta-theory possesses the capabilities to develop theory across multiple levels of analysis. Where Friedland and Alford's (1991) institutional thesis focused upon societal-level logics and their effects on individuals and organisations; the logics thesis presented by Thornton and Ocasio (2008, 2012) represented a broader meta-theory which posited that institutional logics can develop at levels other than the societal level to encompass the organisational,

market, industry, the state and organisational field levels<sup>2</sup>. The importance of engaging with levels other than the societal are justified through the notion of theoretical mechanism which operate differently at different levels of analysis than the main phenomenon under study.

There are various studies within the institutional logics literature which have endeavoured to incorporate multiple levels of analysis when discussing phenomenon, nonetheless, the societal level of analysis which was favoured by Friedland and Alford (1991) has remained a popular starting point for the discussion of institutionalisation. Bhappu (2000) emphasises societal level institutions in her analysis of the Japanese family system where it was argued that the institutional logics of the family served as the foundation for the institutional logic of Japanese corporate networks. The author found that there was some historical contingency in the actions of individuals to nurture social capital; this was regarded as a factor in the maintenance of the family logic (Bhappu, Anita, 2000). Scott, Ruef and Mendel (2000) explore the way in which logics of the professional, government and managerial-market at the societal level transformed the healthcare organisational field where all three variations of the logics were able to co-exist.

Moving away from the societal-level to focus further upon industry-level institutional logics, Thornton and Ocasio (1999) focus upon higher education publishing and the effect of shifts (At the industry level) from an editorial logic to a

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<sup>2</sup> The organisational field and industry levels are those which are important to my research given the focus upon specific organisations within the British energy industry. Both of the levels will be discussed further within this section, but developed more comprehensively in sections 2.3-2.3.3.

market logic. They find that these logics do not emerge as brand new logics, but rather emerge as higher-order societal professional and market logics shape them. Institutional logics research focusing upon the field-level tend to focus upon the competing logics that exist within said field. Kitchener (2002) presented a study concerning U.S. academic health care centres and explored the influence of competing managerial and professional logics on the response to merger initiatives. Greenwood and Suddaby (2006) offer a different perspective on institutional logics at the field-level, instead focusing upon the contradiction that exists between institutional logics in organisational fields. Here it is suggested that organisations at the boundary of an organisational-field are actually the sources of changing institutional logics.

Whilst the studies mentioned within this section are only but a few which discuss institutional logics and institutionalisation at multiple levels, what they serve to highlight is the way in which the broader logics meta-theory offered by Thornton and Ocasio (2008) triggered an abundance of new institutional studies, and also served to cement institutional logics as a ‘trend’ within the institutional thesis. Similar to the misinterpretations of isomorphism discussed previously within section 2.1, institutional logics research is also replete with misinterpretations, imprecision and also a lack of precision when discussing and analysing which level logics become institutionalised. Given my own research context occurs at multiple levels (societal, the market, the industry and the organisational field- level), this is an issue I need to remain conscious of within my own empirical discussion and analysis.. Perhaps one way to overcome the ambiguities concerning levels of analysis is to understand the material, symbolic and cultural elements of these various levels to

further understand the core principles of each level, but also to better exemplify and identify key units of analysis.

### **2.2.3 Material and cultural foundations:**

This section will introduce the material and cultural foundations discussion concerning institutional logics. By introducing these concepts, the literature allows for the discussion of culture and the role it plays in shaping action (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). Having previously discussed society as an inter-institutional system and institutions at multiple levels, it is necessary to discuss how material and cultural foundations may differ across societal sectors and at different levels of analysis in order to gain some understanding of competing institutional logics. A key assumption of institutional logics offered by Friedland and Alford (1991) is that institutional orders in society have both material and cultural characteristics, this assumption can be extended to encompass other levels of analysis outlined in the previous section. Friedland and Alford (1991) commented that emphasising notions such as market mechanism to bring together the discussion of individual preferences, competition and technology becomes too reductionist and that instead, by understanding the origins and values of societal sectors such as the family, profession, states and religion, their respective values are no longer viewing in an economic sense as alternatives. This is a move away from the (ir)rational discussion of the motivations for change and we can move towards analysis which encompasses the conformity and conflict of the material and cultural foundations of institutions and the way in which they shape human and organisational behaviour (Thornton, 2002; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008).

The focus on the material and cultural foundations of institutional sectors and the way in which they can conform or compete has been linked to the cultural turn in

the study of conflict and agency (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008b). Thornton and Ocasio(1999) and Thornton (2004) begin to deal with some of these issues in their analysis of resource competition within higher education publishing both within the editorial logic and the market logic. The authors suggest that in the case of educational publishing, competition largely elicited non-conflictual responses, but with the rise of the market-logic (despite resource competition being less of an issue), there was greater consideration of resource competition and it had stronger influence upon organisational actions and decisions (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999; Thornton, 2004).

By incorporating some discussion of culture and its influence upon organisational and individual actions, institutional logics incorporate both the symbolic and the normative (universalistic principles) components of culture, however argue that focusing upon the cognitive and symbolic is not enough and that institutions and institutional logics discussion is incomplete without the consideration of normative dimensions. This perhaps emanates from their view that institutions are a contingent set of social norms afforded to actors and that logic is not driven by consequence, but by appropriateness (Jackall, 1988).

In discussing the normative aspects of institutions, Thornton and Ocasio (2008) critique the work on norms offered by Parson,(1951), suggesting Parson's work is an over-socialised view of universalism, individual moral behaviours and values. Instead, Thornton and Ocasio (2008) build upon the work of Granovetter (1985) (who critiques Parson's work in the same vein) to form an institutional logics approach which finds a middle-ground between an over-socialised and under-socialised perspective of norms which tends to focus upon resource dependency. Thus, identifying the way in which cultural norms have an influence upon



individuals and organisations is what makes the institutional logics approach distinct. The logics approach posits that norms emerge from experience and archetypes of the institution, Discussing norms and institutions also suggests some uncertainty and doubt when considering universalistic principles, further suggesting Thornton and Ocasio (2008) were aiming to move away from the deterministic institutional thesis, to incorporate more probabilistic ideas implying specific contingencies must exist for certain institutional norms to prevail. The following section will go some way in exploring this notion of contingencies as a meta-theoretical element of institutional logics.

#### **2.2.4 Historical contingency:**

So far we have looked at embedded agency, society as an inter-institutional system, institutions at multiple levels and the material and cultural foundations of the institutional logics. Now I will turn to the final meta-theoretical element of historical contingency as outlined by Thornton and Occasion (2008). For Thornton and Ocasio (2008), historical contingency explores the larger institutional environment and their effects on individual and organisational behaviour. Consideration of the historical contingencies becomes important for the analysis of institutional logics and the institutional orders of the interinstitutional system outlined in section 2.2.2. This can be illustrated by the rise of the market logic within a variety of empirical contexts, for Thornton and Ocasio (1999) the market logics was analysed within the context of higher education publishing, for Scott, Ruef and Mendel, Peter (2000) the empirical context was the healthcare industry,for Lounsbury (2002) and Zajac and Westpha (2004), the focus was more financial and for Meyer and Hammerschmid (2006) the context of examination was within public management in Austria.

Zajac and Westphal (2004) found that financial markets themselves were susceptible to and shaped by institutional forces. The paper traces changes in financial markets as historically contingent upon the shift to an agency perspective in finance in the 1980s and finds that markets do not react to changing corporate practices as financial economists would traditionally expect them to, i.e. to become inherently efficiency, but actually respond to prevailing institutional logics. The focus here upon the market logic and also the way in which markets are not always inherently efficient, but are in fact more malleable and responsive to prevailing logics is useful for my own work. Within British energy industry a competitive market had never really existed prior to the 1980s, so the historical contingency of the logics within British energy were not based upon previous forms of logics prior to the introduction of a neoliberal market and were more so based on the logics of the state and previous more nationalised policies. Here there is already an inherent contradiction between the historical contingency of the logics which would become dominant over the course of the privatisation process. What is more, this latter point also highlights the importance of historical contingency of logics for legitimisation of emerging logics and the deligitimisations of previous logics. This is not something Thornton and Ocasio (2008) really explore in any depth in their original institutional logics thesis and accompanying meta-theory, but it is an issue which will be dealt with later on within this chapter where I discuss the multiplicity of logics at the field-level and institutional work.

Thornton (2004) also argues that historical contingency is key in assessing whether findings in one historical period are valid in another. In a study concerning publishing in higher education and universal or particular effects, Thornton (2004) found that ownership effects were universal across time, but relational and structural

effects were particular to a historical period in which an institutional logic prevailed. Thornton and Ocasio (2008: 109) argue that the objective of including historical contingency in the meta-theory of institutional logics is to ‘explore the effects of economic, political, structural, and normative forces affecting individuals and organizations are indeed historically contingent’.

Clemente, Duran and Roulet (2017: 19) argue that the majority of the works discussed previously have examined the ‘downward influence of logics and history’, thus determining how logics go onto to shape organisational fields and organisational behaviour (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006). Some studies have endeavoured to focus upon the upward influence of logics wherein organisations impart their influence to change fields, narratives, boundaries and practices (Zietsma and Lawrence, 2010). In going back to my discussion presented in section 2.2.2 concerning inter-institutional systems and institutions at multiple levels; if we are to discuss multiple levels of analysis coherently whilst understanding their material and cultural foundations, as well as the contingency of these foundations, then surely I have to discuss both the downward and upward influence of history and logics as discussing one or the other would lead to the privileging of certain levels of analysis?

When considering how to treat history within an institutional logics approach. Suddaby, Foster and Mills (2014) critique the way in which institutional researchers view history as an objective which is measurable. The authors surmise the issues which arise from this objective, more essentialist view of history in that firstly, the richness of the incorporation of history into analysis is lost. Rather than providing more nuanced analysis, historical reductionism leads to analysis becoming fixed, objective and simply a variable of time. In analysing history in a rational-deductive manner, the more complex historical processes involved in institutional change are

reduced to modes of *adoption* or *diffusion* and whilst yes, it is important to recognise these concepts, institutional analysis often analyses adoption and diffusion in isolation of one another, rather than recognising them as part of an ongoing process (Suddaby, Foster and Mills, 2014).

Whilst much of the institutional logics thesis presented by Friedland and Alford (1991) and Thornton and Ocasio (2008, 2012) focuses upon in their terms, the meta-theoretical elements of institutional logics as embedded agency, society as an inter-institutional system, institutions at multiple levels and the cultural and material foundations of institutions; perhaps not enough attention is given to the meta-theoretical element of historical contingency. What is lost view of history in institutional change is the ‘ability to understand the social and cultural embeddedness of institutions and the role of complex processes’ (Suddaby, Foster and Mills, 2014: 107). Khurana (2007: 14-15) notes that the issue of reducing the importance of history is not one which is unique to the institutional logics approach, but is representative of the diminishing appreciation for history in explaining institutional change more generally within neo-institutional research

‘[It] is essential to examine and institution’s birth- its emergence out of an interaction with the larger society and culture, the evolution of its internal dynamic and the interface between the two...The key here is to show organizations responding to particular problems posed by history.’

Current neo- institutional tends to view history in a different light to the description above, instead what we tend to see in neo-institutionalist research is history as a set of underlying conditions (much like the institutional logics perspectives utilised history as part of a meta-theory). History in an institutional

discussion tends to be discussed as both constant and consistent over time and space, with time being treated in an ordered or measured fashion (Suddaby, Foster and Mills, 2014).

### **2.2.5 Problematising the meta-theory of institutional logics, institutional change and institutionalisation:**

The preceding sections have served to outline the institutional logics thesis as presented by Thornton and Ocasio (2008). In taking stock and relating this review of the literature back to (RQ1) *what were the changing institutional logics and how were these changes enacted by key players within the market?* Outlining the institutional logics thesis offered by Friedland and Alford (1991) and Thornton and Ocasio (2008) has been a necessary task as it has given me some understanding of the way in which institutional logics were originally conceptualised. The broad meta-theoretical elements of institutions presented by Thornton and Ocasio (2008) as society as an inter-institutional system, institutions at multiple levels, embedded agency, the material and cultural foundations of institutions and historical contingency aid the understanding and initial theorisation of the way in which institutions and their underlying logics contribute to heterogeneity, stability and change amongst individuals and organisations. When broadly relating these meta-theories on a more observational level to my own research context, each holds some significance to my theoretical and analytical discussion.

Thornton and Ocasio's (2008:104) ideas relating to embedded agency wherein society consists of three levels: 'individuals competing and negotiating,

organisations in conflict and coordination, and institutions in contradictions and interdependence’, this is inherently true for the transformation of British energy which represented a massive upheaval and redirection of the way in which the original energy providers operated as nationalised monopolies, to being restructured and thrust into neoliberal market –like conditions. This disruption then has implications for society as an inter-institutional system wherein there exist multiple expectations for social relations, varying material and cultural foundations and these expectations exist across multiple levels of analysis. Finally, the institutional change which occurred is historically contingent upon issues of the past and previous dominant institutional logics, here historical contingency can be used to legitimise or delegitimise institutional change.

Despite the utility of the institutional logics perspective in enhancing my ability to discuss sources of change, complexity and practices, it nevertheless leaves us unsure of where from institutional logics actually come and why Thornton (2004) and Thornton and Ocasio (2008) chose to outline markets, corporations, professions, states, families and religions as sources of institutional logics. Yet, their institutional logics perspective views actors as nested within higher order levels (societal, organisational, field and individual), but it is not clear why actors actually prefer one logic over another (Powell and Bromley, 2013). Powell and Bromley (2013) also argue that the term institutional logic is ambiguous in itself. Friedland, Alford, Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury all tie the definition of institutional logics to mega-structures in society, but Powell and Bromley argue that this definition almost becomes vacuous in the sense that it appears disconnected from wider institutional environments and more macro inter-institutional systems. Micro and meso level observations are not linked back to larger structures in society, so it becomes unclear

what the institutional argument actually is and which logic is involved (Powell and Bromley, 2013).

In light of these disconnects, analysing and discussing the case of the privatisation of the British energy market from a neo-institutional perspective could be problematic. Delving further into some of the concerns outlined into the previous paragraph, Powell and Bromley (2013) outline the contributions and challenges of neo-institutional analyses of complex organisations in some detail. The authors observe that neo-institutional analysis concerning the micro foundations of the formation and reproduction of organisations have contributed to our understanding of everyday practices and activities within organisations (to be reviewed further in sections later within this chapter via institutional work). At times, this micro perspective has failed to incorporate macro concepts, in this sense ‘critical macro-level processes remain obscured from analytical view, especially when they are taking place beyond the immediate fields under investigation’ (Powell and Bromley, 2013: 6). In an endeavour to further neo-institutional research, Thornton and Ocasio (2008) focus upon competing societal-level belief systems and how these contribute to the shaping of both individuals and organisations. Thornton and Ocasio (2008:99) argue that through ‘providing a link between institutions and action, the institutional logics approach provides a bridge between macro, structural perspectives and more micro, process approaches’. The logics stream of neo-institutional research has proved valuable for prompting research concerning complexity and change, but the focus here has more so been upon competing logics and the multiplicity of logics within a field.

What is lacking, as I mentioned earlier, is the lack of clarity surrounding the source of logics, why are they in conflict, where do logics originate from, how are

logics produced and why do we tie these logics back to the societal sectors outlined by Friedland and Alford (1991) and Thornton (2004)? Furthermore, despite Thornton and Ocasio's claims that logics can cut across levels of analysis, links between the micro, meso and macro levels of discussion are not strong enough within empirical analysis and it can become unclear how certain conflict and arguments are not readily identifiable as 'institutional'. In essence, if I were to simply discuss the underlying logics of change in the case of the privatisation of the British energy market, I would be able to identify heterogeneity of institutional logics and heterogeneity among the expectations of social relations and behaviour between the traditionally identified societal sectors related to logics Friedland and Alford (1991) and Thornton (2004). I am less able to link micro-level discussions back to macro level discussion. This is problematic as the type of change I am concerned with did not originate completely on a micro level, but was prompted and inextricable entwined with macro and more political drivers for change.

I am also stressing the importance of history here because not only am I taking a somewhat historical perspective within my research and utilising historical methods and data later within the thesis, but also because within my empirical discussion and analysis I will have to take into account the way in which actors and organisations used and employed history in the creation of institutional change (or not) and in the emergence and legitimation (or delegitimation) of institutional logics. In reducing the historical perspective to a more rational or essentialist view, the crucial role of historical narrative and interpretation can often be overlooked and much like a historian employs a degree of interpretation to emphasise some facts and not others (Carr, 2008), institutional actors do something similar when attempting to legitimise or



delegitimise new institutional orders or logics. Finally, another issue to be cautious of when discussing the historical contingency of institutional logics in a more rational sense is to assume that the prevailing institutions and institutional orders are superior to those which came before them, implying a higher forms of legitimacy and a more superior set of logics (Kieser, 1994; Suddaby, Foster and Mills, 2014). This more functionalist view imposes a sense of a unifying causal logics through the success of prevailing institutions, when rather analysis should encompass the more complex nature of causality of historical events as part of a wider and complex process of change (Booth and Rowlinson, 2006; Suddaby, Foster and Mills, 2014).

### **2.3 Institutional logics and the organisational field:**

The following sections will elicit the theoretical and empirical developments that address my research question 1(a) *what were the changing institutional logics at the exchange field level?* In addressing this research question through the literature, the following section will build upon the various levels of analysis outlined in section 2.2.2 to discuss how a field has been defined in neo-institutional literature. From sections 2.3.1-2.3.3, I will begin to outline the way in which multiple logics can exist at the field-level and the implications this not only has upon institutional change, but also institutional analysis. It is also within these sections where I will begin a more agent-centric discussion will emerge to discuss the role of actors in the institutional change from a logics perspective, particularly where multiple logics exist and compete with one another.

### 2.3.1 Defining the ‘field’:

The *field* is a fundamental construct in neo-institutionalism, referring to the domain within which particular institutions operate (Scott, 1991). Similar to the way in which the institutional thesis has developed and grown over the years to encompass various interests. The field and its definition have also evolved over the past four to five decades. Early conceptions of the field were referred to as the institutional sphere (Fligstein, 1990), the institutional field (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991) and the institutional environment (Orru, Biggart and Hamilton, 1991). Institutional scholars typically employed the definition of fields offered by DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 148) positing that fields comprise

‘A recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies and other organizations that produce similar services or products.’

DiMaggio and Powell’s assessment of the field is inherently commercialised and emphasises a specific type of actor within a field. Scott (2014: 106) offers a broader definition of the field which encompasses a wider variety of field types, focusing on common cultures and networks and defines the field as a ‘collection of diverse, interdependent organizations that participate in a common meaning system’. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Scott (2014) focused upon the structuration of a field. In discussing the structuration of a field, these authors discuss the field in an isomorphic manner wherein there were clearly defined inter-organisational patterns of domination and coalition through hierarchies amongst actors; there were shared meanings and practices amongst field members ; and there was mutual agreement amongst actors within the field

concerning common enterprises and shared identities (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017). Thus, throughout the early years of institutional research focusing upon the field, discussion and analysis centred around the notion of similarity within organisational fields, depicting them as static and unitary (Wooten and Hoffman, 2008).

Conflict and struggle have also been conceptualised within the field. This conceptualisation of the field is similar to that of Bourdieu's (1993)<sup>3</sup> notion of a field wherein agentic action is structured by a network of social relations; the organisational field is characterised by the way in which an organisations actions are structured the network within which it is embedded (Wooten and Hoffman, 2008). Bourdieu conceptualised the field and applied it to the societal level of analysis through which social, economic, symbolic and cultural capital were discussed in relation to the power of actors within specific fields and the subsequent possibilities for action (Bourdieu, 1985, 1993). Where Scott's conception of the field implies some form of stability, Bourdieu's definition of the field emphasises sentiments of flux wherein actors within societal fields compete over meanings, resources, decision-making and the like (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017).

Emergent institutional studies began to focus upon members of the organisational field and their actions (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996; Holm, 1999). With this renewed perspective, scholars were better able to integrate the discussion of change within the field and were better situated to incorporate

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<sup>3</sup> Fields for Bourdieu denote arenas of production, exchange of knowledge or services, arenas in which actors hold competitive positions and engage in struggle to gain power (Bourdieu, 1993).

ideas concerning organisational interests and agency (DiMaggio, 1988). This development highlighted organisations as possessing the capabilities to act more strategically to the institutional pressures exerted upon them.

### **2.3.1.1 Field types:**

Despite the abundance of studies within institutional studies which discuss and analyse the field, only few contributions elaborate the difference in field types and the corresponding differences in field processes (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017). Much of the institutional literature has distinguished *emerging* and *mature* fields. Emerging fields are typically distinguished by high levels of uncertainty, weaker institutional structures and relations and are typically deemed more prone to risk and crisis (Albertini and Muzzi, 2016); but even then, many studies have discussed the way in which even mature fields can become unstable and prone to change (Hoffman, 1999; Greenwood, Hinings and Suddaby, 2002; Reay and Hinings, 2005).

Fields can consist of different configurations of membership. This variation has come to consist of members from specific industries and sectors (Tolbert and Zucker, 1983), members of social movements (Barley, 2010) and industry members and the way in which they interact with producers, regulators and the public (Reay and Hinings, 2009). With the identification of different membership of a field comes variation in the institutional processes discussed amongst institutional studies. For example, some focus upon commonalities or isomorphism in institutional processes (Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007; Glynn, 2008) whilst other focus upon identity characteristics (Kostova, Roth and Dacin, 2008). This variation is likely to result in

differing forms of empirical analysis and multiple findings relating to field processes.

Zietsma *et al.* (2017: 395) argue that because of this

‘We would expect there to be differences in the purposes of fields; the boundaries around them; the homogeneity or heterogeneity of actors within them; the structure of relational networks between members; the number, complementarity, and compartmentalization of logics in the fields; and in the nature of the collective identity in the field.’

These expectations are not always met and what we are left with are studies which do not outline the nature of the field of interest and instead utilise the field for contextualisation purposes in analysing field-level process and the role of actors and their responses to fields (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017).

Zietsma *et al.* (2017) have provided some discussion of the definitions and related issues outlined above and argue that referring to the purpose a field can go some way in more coherently outlining the nature of the field. Here the authors offer two more general categories for the field as the *exchange field* and the *issue field* (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017)<sup>4</sup>. My focus here will be on the exchange field because as I will demonstrate in the following paragraph, it is a field of similar formation to the of the British gas and electricity industries. Hoffman (1999) and Wooten and Hoffman (2008) have argued that fields are centred around issues and have different effects on institutional processes. Zietsma *et*

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<sup>4</sup> Not limiting fields to these two categories; fields can also be discussed in relation to identity characteristics (Kostova, Roth and Dacin, 2008), policy fields (Stone and Sandfort, 2009), geographical fields (Glynn, 2008), governments as set of fields (Fligstein, 2001).

*al.*(2017: 400) illustrate that the ‘purpose or focus of orchestration of issue fields is to negotiate, govern, and/or compete over meanings and practices that affect multiple fields.’ Issue fields are diverse in nature and this diversity is also true for actors within the field who often have their own distinct identities and commitments to other fields). Given the focus on meanings and the diverse nature of field, conflicting logics tend to be the norm for an issue field (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017).

An exchange field on the other hand is more consistent with DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) definition of a field as actors and their interactions as exchange partners (encompassing producers, suppliers and consumers). Rather than viewing the field as homogenous, analysis within the exchange field recognises that specific populations may share similar practices, norms, meaning systems and identities (Dhalla and Oliver, 2013). Furthering this, to a certain degree, mimetic forces are relevant to the discussion of populations within an exchange field as there is often common pressure in terms of environmental vulnerabilities, pressure from regulators and consumers (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017). Whilst there is a relative degree of homogeneity present, this is not to say no conflict arises amongst populations within an exchange field. Where competition is a factor, there will always exist a struggle for status, power and resources as a result, exchange fields can consist of both homogeneous and heterogeneous actors (Dhalla and Oliver, 2013; Zietsma *et al.*, 2017). The British energy industry is one that is akin to an exchange field as defined by the literature as logistically, there are multiple exchange partners whether they be on the level of supplier-consumer in the production, delivery and consumption of energy, or government and/or legislators-providers in the overseeing of said production and

distribution of energy. Essentially, the exchange field of the British energy industry is concerned with the commodity of energy, where the notions of homogeneity come in to play relate to the supposedly shared values, norms and practices regarding the supply of this commodity. Heterogeneity in this case occurs through the conflicting underlying ideas and principles associated with the transition from a nationalised market to a private market.

In exploring the evolution of the field and its various (At times, competing) definitions, I have been able to briefly trace the way in which the conceptualisation of the field has emerged alongside the evolution of organisational institutionalism (as discussed in section 2.1). The following sections relating to institutional fields will go some way in discussing field-level logics and their diffusion, as well as capturing the idea that fields are not always isomorphic, rather they are a locus for struggle and competition. As a result I will review the literature concerning the multiplicity of institutional logics which exist at the field and the way in which actors are perceived from this perspective.

### **2.3.2 Field-level logics:**

Research focusing on institutional logics is concerned with the role dominant logics play in shaping organisational actions and outcomes (Greenwood *et al.*, 2010), and the effects of the transition from one dominant logic to another (Gawer and Phillips, 2013). These studies broadly explore how logics function and change and make reference to particular elements of the meta-theory outlined by (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a; Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012). Wright and Zammuto (2013) further categorise studies which examine institutional logics and field and

posit that the literature concerning institutional change can be divided into two broad strands for unpacking change processes. The first focuses upon field level changes, paying particular attention to groups of organisational actors located within the field ‘struggle against each other to protect and challenge the status quo’ (Wright and Zammuto, 2013: 308).

The second approach explores how change processes develop at the level of analysis to ‘explore how other levels institutional system influence field change’ (Wright and Zammuto, 2013: 308). Key to this approach is the notion that institutions are embedded in society, field, organisational and individuals (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012). There is agreement within the literature that change is the outcome of dynamics and interactions between these multiple levels, but Wright and Zammuto (2013) argue that few empirical studies have examined the interplay between more than two levels. The authors highlight that attention has focused upon how shifts in society-level ideology affect a field (e.g. Zilber, 2006), or how organisational-level action influences field formation or field change (e.g. Lounsbury, 2007). Wright and Zammuto (2013) call for the combination of the two approaches to unpacking institutional change, firstly, utilising a vertical lens (change across multiple levels of an institutional system) to consider interactions between levels and the processes by which field change may occur and, secondly, a horizontal lens to explore within a field the processes by which organisations shape institutional change through their struggles.

Field-level logics do take the form of rules. Rules are important carriers of logics because of the way they shape the reality of a field, which in turn defines different categories of actors, their interests and their capacity for action (Wright and Zammuto, 2013). Rules are understood as scripts encoding institutional behaviours



and expectations. Scripts are ‘observable, recurrent activities and patterns of interaction characteristic’ of particular settings (Barley and Tolbert, 1997: 100). These scripts serve to mediate between the field level and the level of action. Following this line of thought, Wright and Zammuto (2013) suggest that institutionalisation occurs at the intermediary level between field and organisation through the mechanism of encoding rules, as carrier logics, into scripts.

Discussing organisational-level action allows for the exploration of whether conformity to scripts exist. Institutions both constrain and enable human action, and as scripts diffuse throughout a field, actors translate them into action by interpreting and reinterpreting the logics they encode (Wright and Zammuto, 2013). Actors are not passive (as discussed within institutional work), and thus make and remake connections between scripts, rules and logics as they are received from higher levels (i.e. government and politics). Society-level ideology moves down into fields through discursive activity and in the form of institutional logics (Friedland and Alford, 1991). Ideology here refers to the values, beliefs and assumptions that exist within the level of society (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Shifts in ideology at the societal level, for example greater awareness of an event, can create mechanisms for changing field-level logics. These mechanisms can stimulate discursive activity that can be described as theorising. What is lacking to some extent in the discussion of ideology here is that of macro ideology. Institutional theory tends to take a more macro perspective, so for me, theorisation here needs to condier the macro, especially given the change I am interested in emanated from the macro political level.

### 2.3.3 Changing logics, multiple logics and organisational responses:

Having outlined the evolution of the definition of the field, types of fields and also explored some field-level logics. I will now address the notion that multiple logics can exist at the field level. This will go some way in providing theoretical framing for research question 1(a) *what were the changing institutional logics at the exchange field level?* This section will also move my research away from the more isomorphic discussion of institutional change and institutional fields, to encompass the sentiments expressed by Bourdieu (1985, 1993, 1999) and Zietsma *et al.* (2017) wherein the field is a place of struggle, tension and competition wherein conflict can arise amongst various members and populations. I will do this by exploring the ever more accepted notion that multiple institutional logics can exist at the field-level and that this multiplicity takes its toll upon institutional pressures, organisational decision-making and strategy as well as organisational responses (although this latter point will be reviewed more thoroughly in the next section and the remainder of this chapter).

Much of the institutional literature has analysed institutional change as the shift from one dominant logic to another, with the dominant logics being the primary influence upon behaviour (despite other logics existing in the same field) (Hoffman, 1999; Greenwood, Hinings and Suddaby, 2002; Reay and Hinings, 2009). Greenwood *et al.* (2011) argue that this focus upon a dominant logic is somewhat contradictory to those claiming to adhere to Friedland and Alford's (1991) original thinking wherein organisational field was discussed as being comprised of multiple logics. Greenwood *et al.* (2011) thus characterise the organisational field as being

institutionally complex with multiple logics. Multiple logics can be competitive, cooperative, independent or blurred (Goodrick and Reay, 2011).

Besharov and Smith (2014) explore the notion of the multiplicity of institutional logics more closely in relation to Thornton and Ocasio's (1999:804) original conceptualisation of logics as 'socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules.' With this we can infer that each specific logic possesses its own set of organising principles and it is when these logics begin to overlap that we see actors having multiple logics within and across fields to draw upon (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Besharov and Smith, 2014). What is more, organisations can embody multiple logics as they are often frequently exposed to institutional environments where multiple logics exist (Greenwood *et al.*, 2011).

Within the discussion of the multiplicity of institutional logics is the idea that logics can compete with one another. The literature encompassing the discussion and analysis of competing alternative logics posits a variety of mechanisms which effects competing logics and change including, environmental pressures, political pressures and social movements (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a). Thornton and Ocasio (2008) argue that competing logics are not the sole explanation for changing institutional logics, rather they exist antecedently or emerge as a consequence.

In viewing competing logics as antecedent or emergent (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a), the questions become under what conditions do competing logics become a focal point of institutional analysis? And why do these competing logics emerge? Sine and David (2003) present the notion of environmental jolts. Meyer (1982: 515) defined environmental jolts as 'transient perturbations whose

occurrences are difficult to foresee and whose impact on organizations are disruptive and often inimical.’ Sine and David (2003) endeavour to expand this definition to encompass the impact of environmental jolts on entire fields of organisational activity. Where environmental jolts become significant is through the way in which they illuminate and bring to the forefront any outcomes which are contrary to the institutionalised expectations of the field; that is that environmental jolts can essentially prompt a field-wide crisis which causes actors to initiate actions intended to avoid or overcome further crises (Sine and David, 2003). Given this final point regarding actors and their positions and role within competing logics, the following section which will review the way in which the literature concerning the multiplicity of institutional logics perceives actors.

#### **2.3.3.1 Organisational responses to multiple logics at the field-level:**

So far I have discussed the organisational field level and the multiple and competing logics at the field-level. Whilst this gives some indication of the institutional environment and, rules and values; I now need to provide a more agentic discussion to individuals and organisations within this these levels of analyses. This section will begin to address embedded agency (as outlined in the institutional logics meta-theory) and to some extent, the critique in the paradox of embedded agency (Battilana, 2006). This section marks the beginning of my consideration of research question 1(b) *how did organisations respond to and initiate changing logics at the field level?* And will aid in my determining of the

way in which the institutional logics thesis perceives actors and their roles in institutional change.

Within much of the institutional-field literature, actors are perceived as somewhat reactionary to changing field-level logics. For example, the Sine and David (2003) publication concerning environmental jolts, actors are perceived as reactionary to exogenous shocks and where Greenwood *et al.* (2010) discuss the multiplicity of logics and the heterogeneity of organisational responses, their discussion of actors is limited to just that, as more passive responders to change.,

Zietsma *et al.* (2017) develop the discussion of fields and agency further to argue that various field types and their respective conditions will have an impact on the agency that is possible for actors within and across the field. This perspective is still problematic as it again harks back to this idea of the paradox of embedded agency (Battilana, 2006) and the problem of the lack of focus upon how actors become disembedded from institutions enough to change them. Whilst Battilana (2006) critiqued the notion of embedded agency calling for a perspective which recognised agency further, Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum (2009) also later went on to critique studies utilising the concept of the institutional entrepreneur wherein they argued that actors were now viewed as completely removed from institutional constraints (Cooper, Ezzamel and Willmott, 2008). What is clear from reviewing the literature concerning the various fields and members of fields which exist, is that there is likely going to be varying levels of constraints and influence placed upon actors and organisations and vice versa. Zietsma *et al.* (2017: 405) acknowledge this fact suggesting that

‘Within fields, not all actors have equivalent influence on field processes such as maintaining the status quo and keeping boundaries in place.

Underlying these processes are different mechanisms that ensure or endanger positions of actors in a field. As such the following forces are notable in the literature.: (1) status differences and core/periphery structure, which suggests both hierarchy and network imagery of fields, and (2) the existence of actors that play structuring or governing roles, such as professional associations; accreditation; standards; or governance organizations.’

In recognising these differences across actors, Zietsma *et al.*(2017) are then able to identify various types of actors which can exist within a field and outline five main categories of actors.

The first type the authors discuss are *central/elite actors* who are typically high status and possess influence upon both change and stasis of exchange fields (*see* Greenwood, Hinings and Suddaby, 2002; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006 for discussion of accounting and law firms). What is significant about elite actors is their ability to span boundaries and exist in other fields, as a result they have more knowledge of alternatives and thus have more influence and capabilities to influence others within the field to change (Greenwood, Hinings and Suddaby, 2002; Zietsma *et al.*, 2017). Zietsma *et al.* (2017) also go on to outline *peripheral or marginalised actors* who are less institutionally bound by actors who are central within the field (Maguire, Hardy and Lawrence, 2004); *middle status actors* who often defend status hierarchy within institutional fields (Kellogg, 2009); *new actors* who enter the field and can increase the diversity of membership, as well as goals and meanings (Maguire and Hardy, 2009); and finally, *multiply embedded actors* who are embedded in multiple

fields and perhaps more reflexive than the previously listed groups of actors (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017).

#### **2.3.4 Summary of logics and field-level change:**

The sections so far which have reviewed the literature concerning the institutional field, field-level logics, types of fields and the multiplicity of field-level logics have allowed for the more theoretical consideration of (RQ1) What were the changing institutional logics and how were these changes enacted by key players within the market? In breaking this down further, the preceding sections have specifically targeted research question 1(a) *what were the changing institutional logics at the exchange field level?*

Similar to the variegated evolution of organisational institutionalism, the definition of the field and the way in which it has been perceived by institutional theorists has also developed in a varied manner. At the broadest level of discussion, literature exploring the field has discussed the notion of isomorphism through the structuration of the field and the shared meaning and practices of the field members (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott, 2014). As the concept of the field developed, we saw the emergence of the definition of the field as one which is more diverse encompassing conflict, struggles and tension (Bourdieu, 1999; Suddaby and Viale, 2011).

What these sections have aided with is not only my understanding of the foundations of the conceptualisation of the field, but also that in removing labels of isomorphism, multiplicity and variation, the field is essentially a space which is populated by specific members. What is more the field is a space relating to exchange and houses actors from organisations, industries, regulators,

governments, elites, consumers and so on. Where identifying the field and its associated members. The potential diversity of a field's population is useful for my own research as the discussion of domestic energy and the privatisation processes of the 1980s include many of the members outlined within these sections, particularly where I discuss field as a place of exchange. What is more, the idea that central/elite actors exist (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017) and have the capability to bear more influence is also significant for my work given that privatisation and its associated ideology was first instigated by political elites who possess the ability to enter other fields to gain knowledge and power.

Despite the way in which the discussion of the field has aided the progression of the neo-institutionalism, some shortcomings still exist in the theorisation and analysis of the field. One of the fundamental limitations of organisational institutionalism is its difficulty in explaining cases of field-level change (Dacin, Goodstein and Scott, 2002). When taking the meta-theoretical elements of institutional logics discussed in previous sections into account; organisational actors are perceived as embedded within institutions and institutionalised worlds replete with taken-for-granted –assumptions (Suddaby and Viale, 2011). Given the embedded nature of agency, it becomes difficult to explain the role of actors in resisting or initiating change, which goes back the argument of the paradox of embedded agency discussed within section 2.2.1 as outlined by Battilana(2006). Battilana (2006) argues that the paradox of embedded agency has emerged as neo-institutionalist researchers have paid little attention to human agency, neglecting the individual level of analysis and evading the discussion and analysis of the interrelations of individuals, organisations and institutional dynamics.



This paradox is heightened where studies concerning the multiplicity of institutional logics tend to analyse organisations as responsive and to some degree, passive in the processes of institutional change and institutionalisation. Despite the efforts of Zietsma *et al.*(2017) in outlining actors, their positions and agency within a field, we are still left with too broad a discussion of agency and not offered enough in the way of understanding the type of work specific actors actually engage in and how this then contributes to and effects institutional change. In order to incorporate the more individual (and even organisational) level of analysis, I will in the following sections begin to review the notions of institutional work and the institutional entrepreneur. This will go some way in providing a more balanced discussion of institutional structure and agency, but will also aid me to explore the second part of research question one concerning key players within the market, and more specifically, research question 1(b) *how did organisations respond to and initiate changing logics at the field level?* Thus, the following sections of this chapter will go some way in discussing agency and institutional work, the role of actors in institutional change and the type of work actors engage in within institutional change. This more agentic institutional review will presented in relation to institutional logics and the organisational field, and within the conclusions of this chapter, I will highlight some points of contention between all three tropes of neo-institutional literature.

#### **2.4 Agency and institutional work**

So far, this literature has allowed me to discuss literature and existing studies relating to RQ1 *what were the changing institutional logics and how were these changes enacted by key players within the market?* As embedded agency does not go

far enough, my focus now needs to turn to the literature on Institutional Work. Consulting this literature will also allow me to go beyond viewing individuals and organisations as merely responsive to institutional change and changing or competing institutional logics, to further explore the active role of individuals and organisations in institutional change processes and to better answer the sub-research question 1(b) *how did organisations respond to changing logics at the field level?* This is important because the literature concerning changing field-level logics and the organisational responses to these changing logics tends to present actors as somewhat passive. Institutional work is a growing body of literature that considers actors beyond the passive role, the literature seeks to bring the individual back into the neo-institutionalist discussion of organisations.

The term ‘institutional work’ was coined by Thomas Lawrence and Roy Suddaby (2006) and the majority of papers consulted within this section of the literature review begin their discussion by quoting these authors’ definition of institutional work as ‘the purposive action of individuals and organisations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions’ (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 215). This very much indicates the importance ascribed by this literature to the role of actors and organisations, hitherto problematised in notions such as institutional entrepreneurship (Sine and David, 2003; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006) as central to studies of institutions. This in itself swings the pendulum back from the tendential structuralism of neo-institutionalism wherein institutions determine the behaviour of actors and individuals towards agency.

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) develop their perspective of institutional work from Jepperson’s (1991) definition of institutions as both the intentional and unintentional product of purposive action. Jepperson’s definition is crucial as it

develops the perspective of institutions as passive constructions of meaning by participants, to viewing institutions as patterns of interaction supported by mechanisms of control. Thus institutions are the product of intentional actions of institutional agents, aimed at reproduction or maintenance, change or destruction / disruption of institutions. Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) developed their conception of institutional work broadly through ideas of agency and sociology of practice. Institutional work approaches, which have spawned into a large variety of investigative strands, offers a way of more explicitly including the actions on an organisational level into the study of institutional change, including the interpretations, modifications, resistances or embraces of external stimuli by organisational/institutional agents – such as those of the political reform agenda central to my study. Institutional work therefore promises to form a bridge from the macro-institutional and cultural, political and economic affairs to the level of organizational work.

Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca (2009) were influenced by DiMaggio's (1988) concept of institutional entrepreneurship through which the notions of strategy and power were re-introduced into neo-institutional studies. Lawrence and Suddaby were also influenced by Oliver's (1991) discussion of agency wherein strategic responses to institutional processes were outlined, and the notion of deinstitutionalisation was introduced. Where the authors were influenced by sociology of practice, there is clear intent to discuss institutional work with regards to the activities of individuals and organisations in effecting the events and outcomes they achieve, rather than adopting a more processual perspective where a sequence of events leads to a particular outcome (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). In arguing for a more processual perspective, I am positing this in line with processual thinking as per Langley (2007)

who argues for the consideration of phenomena in a more dynamic manner to consider ideas such as events, change, temporality and temporal evolutions and activities.

Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) notion of institutional work as purposive action and the creation, maintenance and disruption of institutions, is elaborated by Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum (2009) into three key conceptual assumptions: firstly, that actors are reflexive, capable and goal-oriented beings; secondly, the actions of actors are central to institutional dynamics; and, finally, that institutional work serves to capture both structure and agency as well as their interrelations.

Since its conception, Lawrence, Leca and Zilber (2013) argue that institutional work conversations can be broadly separated into three categories concerning: *how* institutional work occurs; *who* does institutional work; and *what* constitutes institutional work. The discussion of *how* institutional work occurs can be done through the analysis of the creation, maintenance and disruption of institution. Whilst research focusing on *how* institutional work concentrates on the institutional entrepreneur, there have been some studies that have sought to understand the creation of institutions from a work perspective, identifying powerful individuals but also collectives as the sources of either stability or change, but also the kinds of work involved in doing so (Lawrence et al., 2013). For instance, Perkmann and Spicer (2008), in their paper '*How are management fashions institutionalised? The role of institutional work*', explore the way in which management fashions are institutionalised and argue that management practices become fashionable when they are anchored in a wider institutional field. It was identified that institutionalisation occurred through 'political work', 'technical work' and 'cultural work'. Perkmann

and Spicer (2008) draw upon the work which emphasises that institutions have different pillars: regulative, normative and cognitive.

#### **2.4.1 Associating work with the regulative, normative and cognitive institutional pillars:**

The regulative pillar is perhaps the most commonly discussed within institutional theory. Literature addressing the regulative pillar often refers to the way in which institutions constrain and regularise behaviour (Scott, 2014). Scholars associated with the regulative pillar are likely to focus upon regulatory processes involving the establishment of rules, conformity to rules and sanctions geared towards manipulating future behaviour (Scott, 2014). We are likely to see the regulative pillar feature heavily in the work of institutional economists such as Douglass C. North (1990) who, despite more recently beginning to focus upon cultural pillars of institutions (North, 2005), tended to focus upon rule systems and enforcement mechanisms (Scott, 2014). The regulative pillar is something I will also pick up on more firmly within the next chapter and subsequent empirical chapters. I will particularly make the connections here between the regulative pillar, the associated more technical and political practices and situate this within the idea of the exchange field outlined earlier within the chapter (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017).

Scholars focussing on the normative pillar are typically concerned with the ‘prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension to social life’ (Scott, 2014: 64). The normative aspect encompasses both norms and values wherein values are the notion of those things that are preferred and desirable, and which form the standards to which existing structures and or behaviours are compared to and assessed by.

Inscribed in social mores, discourses and stories (as well as other ways of preserving and conveying customs), norms provide an outline for the way in which things should be done. Thus the normative pillar defines goals and objectives whilst outlining appropriate ways to pursue them (Scott, 2014).

This definition of the normative pillar suggests a level of universality or a collective amongst individuals, but this is not entirely the case as some norms and values are applicable to selected types of actors or positions which naturally gives rise to roles the ‘conception of appropriate goals and activities for particular individuals and specialised positions’ (Scott, 2014: 64). Roles are an interesting concept for the discussion of institutional work. They pertain to the norms and values by which specific actors are supposed to behave and thus are prescriptive, normative expectations imposed by other important actors, often with a variety of social reward and sanctioning processes attached. Roles can also be formally constructed by organisations wherein specific positions are created and defined to carry different responsibilities and may also define the material resources available to an actor within this specific role (Scott, 2014). Roles can also be emergent through time as a result of interaction and as differentiated expectation develop to guide behaviour, this emergent element is something I will explore further within the following chapter (cultural political economy) via a Gramscian discussion of intellectuals. The Gramscian notion of intellectuals are not interchangeable to the conceptions of institutional work, rather I will later demonstrate the more dynamic and to some extent, processual nature of the emergence of roles.

The third pillar pertaining to the cognitive typically encompasses anthropological and sociological institutionalists who stress the importance and centrality of cognitive elements of institutions. This pillar very much relates to the

nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made. The cognitive element is here taken very seriously and thus the cultural-cognitive pillar can be perceived as ‘mediating between the external world of stimuli and the response of the individual organism is a collection of internalized symbolic representations of the world’ (Scott, 2014: 67). The importance of symbols and meanings is emphasised within this pillar of institutionalism, and the objective conditions as well as subjective interpretations of these conditions are crucial in the understanding and explanation of action (Scott, 2014), something which is key for my own research. The cognitive perspective focuses upon semiotic features of culture treating them both as subjective beliefs and symbolic systems which are both objective and external to the actor (Scott, 2014). Cultural systems operate on multiple levels which are not bounded but rather ‘nested’ so that the more ‘broad cultural frameworks penetrate and shape individual beliefs on the one hand, and individual constructs can work to reconfigure far-flung belief systems on the other’ (Scott, 2014: 68). Cultural elements vary in the degree of institutionalisation and to the degree in which they are embodied in routines and organisational practices, and when discussing the cultural-cognitive, it relates more to the more embedded cultural forms.

#### **2.4.2 Categorising types of institutional work:**

Having discussed the place of roles within the normative pillar of institutionalism, it is important to discuss the difference in perception of roles within the cultural pillar of institutionalism. Within the cultural element, roles serve to highlight the importance of templates for different types of actors and scripts for action. Within the cultural pillar, the differentiation of roles is present and the fact that roles can develop depending on localised contexts and repetitive patterns of action becoming habitualised is recognised (Scott, 2014), however there is also some

recognition of a wider institutional framework that provide pre-formulated organising principles and scripts and this is evident in the work of Meyer and Rowan (1977) where wider belief systems and cultural frames are implemented or adopted by actors and organisations.

Institutional work encompasses various activities that will address each of these pillars in some way. Perkmann and Spicer (2008) through their discussion of the institutionalisation of management fashions highlight that multiple forms of institutional work exist, whether this be political, technical or cultural work, and that each of these different types of work outlined are likely to address one of the pillars identified by Scott (1995). For a stronger institutionalisation effect, institutional work (whatever form it may occur in) must occur simultaneously, meaning notable and comprehensive institutional change can occur once all three pillars undergo significant change (Campbell, 2004). Multi-dimensionality is key here, although there may exist variation of the interrelations between the regulative, normative and cognitive pillars; the stronger and more durable strategies of institutional change are those that account for the multi-dimensionality or 'multi-aspect nature' (Hoffman and Ventresca, 1999) of institutional change.

#### **2.4.2.1 Political work:**

Given the fact the time period I am studying within this thesis is rife with political discussion across many levels of analysis, it is encouraging to see that some of the more recent institutional work studies are encompassing some of the political ideas DiMaggio (1988) described as crucial in explaining and understanding institutional change. What this serves to highlight is that institutional theory and institutional work do consider the political, but they mainly consider the political in relation to meaning. These studies offer consideration of the reframing and



theorisation of meaning and all 'highlight the contested and incomplete character of institutionalisation projects, often neglected in standard accounts of new practice diffusion' (Lounsbury and Pollack, 2001: 321). Thus meaning has come to be considered as a sort of resource which in itself can be constrained or emerge within the institutional context. In viewing meaning as a resource, I can go some way in analysing the way in which actors can manipulate this resource in the processes of institutional change, maintenance and/or disruption as a self-interest practice (Rao, Morrill and Zald, 2000; Zilber, 2008).

Whilst much of the focus of their work relates to these mechanisms of diffusion, DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 147) also elaborated the connection between institutional processes and 'the influence of elite interests'. This element of their paper is much less frequently cited. A similar theme of elites and their influence upon organisations and institutional processes was also explored in the work of Tolbert and Zucker (1983), but the discussion of political influences on institutional processes has received little attention and has therefore largely been lost in institutional research over the years. This latter point is of particular significance for my own work. With the privatisation of British energy, there is a distinct political influence in the decisions made to alter institutional fields and processes. This becomes evident when considering the changes which occurred during the 1980s and 1990s in British energy were geared towards creating a market where one had not previously existed and this was largely done through the implementation of a neoliberal political programme and its according ideological principles.

Political work concerns the generation of social support for a practice through the recruitment of relevant actors and the establishing of rules and regulations. This essentially relates to the idea of advocacy in which political support for a practice is

garnered. Within political work, Perkmann and Spicer (2008) discuss the concept of institutional entrepreneurs who are identified as possible dominant players within an industry, professional bodies, the state and non-governmental organisations. These players must possess the skills necessary to form coalitions and networks by speaking to the common interests of a diverse range of stakeholders (Pelkmans, 2001). These institutional entrepreneurs can advocate practices and also influence regulation and the standardisation of practices.

Throughout the review of institutional logics and institutional fields offered within this thesis there has been some highlighting of political struggles, political pressures and political contestations. Whilst there is some recognition of the political within institutional logics and institutional fields discourse, it has mainly been highlighted as a mechanism to explain diversity or competing logics. Zilber (2008) discusses institutionalisation as a political process, highlighting that power relations have always in some way been a part of the institutional discussion. Early formulations of politics and power in institutional processes have been reviewed earlier within this chapter through Oliver's (1991) analysis of the empowerment of actors in relation to institutional structures and DiMaggio's (1988) call to take the politics into account within institutional analysis. Typically, political processes in institutional theory are demonstrated as the articulation of power and power-relations through meanings (Zilber, 2008), which is concurrent with Friedland and Alford's (1991) notion of institutional meaning as the cultural foundations of institutional logics. Actors can manipulate these meanings to adhere to their own interpretations and do so taking into account their differing interests and positions (Maguire, Hardy and Lawrence, 2004).

Power dynamics are especially prevalent in studies of institutional change (Oakes, Townley and Cooper, 1998; Greenwood, Hinings and Suddaby, 2002; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005), or in the creation of new institutions (Maguire, Hardy and Lawrence, 2004; Maguire and Hardy, 2006). Oakes, Townley and Cooper (1998) analyse in their study concerning the introduction of business planning to provincial museum and heritage sites in Canada, the way in which business planning is used as a political tool. Within this study, there is the distinction between what is seeable and what is sayable through the specification of what will be documented highlighting that ‘through a process of naming, categorizing and regularizing, business planning replaced one set of meanings, defined by the producers within the field, with another set that was defined in reference to the external market (Oakes, Townley and Cooper, 1998: 277). Similarly, Greenwood, Hinings and Suddaby (2002) explore the changing jurisdictions in accounting firms within the field of professional business services to highlight the way in which professional services actors seek to legitimise change by theorising it. Theorising here relates to the way in which actors interpret, represent and translate issues to aid the justification of change and promoted the diffusion of new institutional practices. In developing the notion of theorisation, Maguire, Hardy and Lawrence (2004) argue that the ability to theorise is political by nature and argue that entrepreneurs seek out subject positions which enables them to engage in theorisation to give legitimacy to new practices which they are in favour of. Theorisation is a key aspect of institutionalisation and so here, the political is not partially a distinct domain, but a pervasive distributive affair. These studies do not tend to look at the political in relation to politicians. What these studies serve to illustrate is the power of language and actors in the processes of institutional change and creation, here language is what

creates reality, rather than the particular agenda of institutional actors (Zilber, 2008). Studies which focus upon the discursive efforts of competing institutional actors is typically where the struggle over meaning-making is prevalent within institutional theory. Creed, Scully and Austin (2002) explore the way in which different actors provide different legitimating accounts in relation to workplace discrimination. The authors identified five different frames from which parties debated the issue, with each different frame connected to different aspects of culture and social identities. Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) explore the rhetorical strategies employed by political parties to either legitimise or deligitimise their efforts to procure institutional change. Here the main issue under focus relates to the support (or not) of innovation; the authors found that the struggle over this issue existed at the rhetorical level where two distinct discursive communities existed, each with their own institutional vocabulary and each with their own material and text which were employed to legitimise their preferred logics (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005).

However, this focus on meaning can also be somewhat limiting in institutional analysis as it lacks structural analysis and thus the ability to theorise whole political programmes. What is more, the majority of the studies discussed above apply a macro-political idea to a very micro perspective and do not seem to move beyond this. This again harks back to some of the issues I identified in Haveman and Hayagreeva (1997) studied the co-evolution of institutions and organisations within the context of the Californian thrift industry how progressivism and changes in institutional logics at the societal level had an effect on the formation of organisational forms at the industry level. Here what was perhaps less explored within this co-evolutionary process of institutionalisation was the way in which the societal-level logics would evolve further and become further institutionalised.

Furthermore, the analysis of power and politics within institutional studies does not appear to move beyond processes of (de)legitimation. This is not to say that this is not an important element of institutional analysis (indeed It is one that will feature heavily within my institutional empirical analysis). What is lacking is the progression of analysis beyond (de)legitimation processes and the view that institutionalisation is a sort of outcome that becomes fixed. This will become a point of contention and discussion for my research in the following chapter and subsequent empirical chapters. I will argue that institutionalisation is a kind of continuous process where struggle over meaning is implied, this should be the case as actors and their interests do not suddenly become concurrent with one another once institutionalisation has occurred, particularly where political programmes are concerned. To elicit this, I will turn to the Gramscian notions of intellectuals and hegemony in the following chapter to capture some of these ideas; these concepts help me bring to the forefront the struggle over meaning and contestations between meanings.

#### **2.4.2.2 Technical work:**

Technical work in Perkmann and Spicer's (2008) paper concerning the institutionalisation of fashionable management practices is discussed via theorisation, standardisation, and mimicry. Theorisation (as per Perkmann and Spicer) refers to the idea of adding rigour to a new form of practice, theorisation involves the development of a model of practice that specifies the failings of older models of practice to generate legitimacy around new models of practice, these newer models

are formalised in new templates, procedures, or tools administered in different contexts and can be communicated effectively to managers, clients and stake holders (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001). Theorisation here is not about theory per se; instead it is one of the ways in which institutional theory discusses multi-level changes. If I relate this back to the previous section where I discuss political work, this theorisation can indeed relate to politics and the theorisation of new modes of practices through scripts and the like, but this does not move beyond the basic description. This point specifically is something I wish to contribute to further and will do so within the next chapter. Standardisation refers to the strategies aimed at reducing ambiguities and transforming a proposed practice into an actual programme for implementation and commercialisation (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008), this description of standardisation suggests a level of homogeneity in organisational practice and within the British energy industry standardisation of practice does exist, and yet we still see issues in the lack of transparency in practice and of course the oligopolistic and cartel-like tendencies some of the organisations operate within. Mimicry is the alignment of new practice with existing common practice. Crucial to mimicry is the notion of ambiguity which allows adopters in organisations to adopt management fashions opportunistically (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008).

#### **2.4.2.3 Cultural work:**

Cultural work refers to the way in which practices are framed by activities in order to appeal to a wider audience (Benford and Snow, 2000). Practices are typically framed through the promotion of discourses that associate practices with widely accepted norms and values (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008). This often occurs through the development of professionalised bodies of expertise. Perkmann and Spicer (2008) highlight professions as long having been a source of normative

isomorphic pressures which result in organisations adopting similar practices based on normative legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Professionals and professionalization play a crucial role in institutionalising practices, acting on a ‘field-wide basis and can therefore be seen as anchoring the practice across fields, relatively independently from the adopting organizations’ (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008: 829).

Another way in which cultural work occurs is by changing the responsibilities of existing professional groups in order to retain and employ new practices. Abbott (1988) describes this change in responsibilities as an extension of ‘jurisdiction’ of professional knowledge. This in turn allows for the extension of the ‘spaces of activity for which their members claim responsibility’ (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008: 830). To legitimise this extension of jurisdiction, the narratives and claims of emerging professions often involve the contestation of existing professions’ jurisdictions. Scarbrough (2002) described this process as the engagement in ‘colonisation’ whereby professionals interpret new ideas and implement these new interpretations within their professional body for self-serving interests. Perkmann and Spicer (2008: 831) found the definition of professional jurisdictions within their study of how management fashions were institutionalised to be crucial to the understanding of cultural work and the promotion of management fashions as it highlighted how institutional entrepreneurs possessed the ability to ‘embed a fashionable practice within wider systems of values, notably professional skills and identities’.

#### **2.4.3 The role of actors in institutional work:**

With the question of *who* does institutional work, the prominent answer in existing literature is professionals and other actors associated with the professions

(Lawrence et al., 2013). When looking at the relationship between professionals and institutional work, we often see this as explored in terms of the connection of the phenomenon of institutional change in societies (Suddaby and Viale, 2011), and through the role of institutional work within professional service firms (Singh and Jayanti, 2013). Research focusing on institutional work concerning *who* engages in institutional work has also focused on actors operating at the top-level of an organisation. Kraatz (2009) argues that the importance of leaders in organisations has been somewhat overlooked by research exploring institutions and organisations. Kraatz (2009) maintains that leaders within an organisation have the capability to shape organisations as institutions through their distinctive institutional work. This description of leaders within organisations is reminiscent of the idea of political work outlined by Perkmann and Spicer (2008) and further conceptualised and reinforced by Rojas (2010) and Riaz, Buchanan, & Bapuji (2011) wherein these organisational leaders are discussed as elite actors with extensive powers echoing political powers that enable the reshaping of organisational and structural norms and the discourse associated with this transformation.

Perkmann and Spicer (2008) discuss the idea of the role of multiple actors in the institutionalisation process arguing that in some instances of change, different types of institutional work is involved which leads us to question whether this institutional work is carried out by one or multiple actors. Relating back to their study of the institutionalisation of management fashions, Perkmann and Spicer (2008) argue that different actors carried out the political work, technical work, and cultural work and this conceptually makes sense as different types of actors specialise in different skills that make them capable to carry out various forms of institutional work. By contrast, less successful attempts at institutionalisation occur



where a more limited range of actors were present which ultimately resulted in a limited skill set for the carrying out of institutional work. The example given to highlight this is the attempt to promote the management fashion of excellence where actors with cultural skills were present. Whilst these actors were useful in embedding practice discourse of ambition and progression, the lack of technical and political skills available resulted in a lack of advocacy, theorisation and standardisation of management practices which meant the attempt at institutionalisation was unsuccessful in the long-term (Peters and Waterman, 1982).

The discussion of *what* constitutes institutional work often focuses on agency. Battilana and D'Aunno (2009) present the understanding of agency as multi-dimensional, relational, and encompassing habit, imagination, and practical evaluation. The authors argue that institutional work can be intentional, but this intention is very much dependent on the dimension of agency and the way in which this shapes the institutional work carried out by the individual. Lawrence et al. (2010) begin to develop the concept of work and its connections to institutions and what constitutes institutional work through the concepts of intentionality and effort. The authors discuss intentionality via Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) three-part conceptualisation of the term. They impart that the most commonly held view of intentionality in the context of institutional work is conceptualised as projective agency, where the intentionality of the agent is future-oriented and strategic in reshaping social situations (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Intentionality and institutional work may also manifest in a more practical sense wherein intentionality is focused upon meeting the short-term demands of immediate situations, and finally intentionality and institutional work may occur in the form of habit where agency is involved in the recall, selection, and application of implicit strategies of action that

have developed through previous interactions (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca, 2011).

#### **2.4.5 Summary of agency and institutional work:**

The preceding sections have allowed for the considerations of (RQ1) what were the changing institutional logics and how were these changes enacted by key players within the market? And 1(b) How did organisations respond to and initiate changing logics at the field level? These sections adhere to and further illuminate the more agentic discussion of institutional change, which is often lost in the institutional logics literature.

The review of institutional work has provided some discussion of what constitutes institutional work, who does this work and the forms and types of work actors can engage in. These sections demonstrate that whilst yes, there are similar discussions as institutional logics to be had concerning the way in which institutions can constrain and influence behaviour (particularly when considered in relation to the more regulative pillars of institutions), but also in fact that actors possess the abilities to influence institutions and institutional structures. This final point pertains to a more constructivist view of institutionalism and institutional change.

The literature concerning institutional work is very much concerned with symbols and meanings, this is particularly evident when relating institutional work to the cognitive institutional pillars, but also notable when analysing political work and power relations. Here symbols and meaning are presented in a more discursive sense and political work generally relates to the ways in which multiple or competing actors utilise language, meaning and symbols to legitimise their actions and decision-making within institutional change. This brings me to highlight one of the key gaps

within the institutional work literature; whilst there is clear consideration of the political elements of discussion within institutional work, it is perhaps reduced to institutional conceptualisations. What is missing is the consideration of political programmes and the ideologies that help actors first make sense of the world they exist within and then how they go on to produce meaning. This key limitation is one of the reasons I chose to explore the cultural political economy literature as it takes these final points in to better consideration. Thus the following chapter will serve in some ways to overcome the political reductionism of institutional work through the exploration of key concepts such as the economic imaginary and the Gramscian notions of hegemony and intellectuals.

## **2.6 Chapter conclusions- assessing neo-institutional theory for the study of change:**

The purpose of the above review was, first, to outline the key units of analysis and relations that can help address **(RQ1)** what were the changing institutional logics and how were these changes enacted by key players within the market? Second, was to identify the stock of empirical work that would help address my specific focus. Expressed in research question 1(a) *what were the changing institutional logics at the exchange field level?* My focus here was upon reviewing the literature pertaining to institutional logics and the institutional field. My second guiding research question was 1(b) *how did organisations respond to and initiate changing logics at the field level?* This prompted me to take a more a more agentic institutional focus and explore the role of actors within institutional change.

Much of the institutional logics literature provides some insight into how dominant logics cause organisations within a field to conform and become isomorphic (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), often leading to the assumption that logics

guide the action and behaviour of actors causing their action to become 'comprehensible and predictable' (Lounsbury, 2002: 255). This, however, is a narrow interpretation closely aligned with the reductionist strand of rational choice institutionalism, and to some extent historical institutionalism (in terms of path dependence) and is something I wish to move away from within my research. I am more interested in highlighting the processes of institutionalisation (rather than institutionalisation of logics as an outcome) as something that is complex and non-linear. I find the recent developments in the discussion of competing institutional logics and how this can act as a stimulus for institutional change and transformation (Gawer and Phillips, 2013) more fruitful for the discussion of change within the British energy sector since the 1980s?

Individuals can draw upon multiple logics to induce change. According to neo-institutionalist theory, indeed, the contradictions that may exist between competing institutional logics do not have to present obstacles to actors; they can aid an individual in mobilising alternative logics. These ambiguities provide perceived scope for change as they reduce feelings of uncertainty and make alternative logics more attractive. Furthermore, contradictions and ambiguities can be articulated as discourse by key players to make particular logics appear more or less attractive (Brown, Ainsworth and Grant, 2012). What is key in the notion of multiple and competing institutional logics is that it allows for the analysis and understanding of the links between logics and institutional change and how and when these logics shift, and which of these logics were most powerful during that moment of change (Gawer and Phillips, 2013).

The concept of institutional logics has been useful in depicting social transformations. Much of the research from this perspective has focused upon the

shift from one dominant logic to another, or the layering of multiple logics (Powell and Bromley, 2013). Research concerning institutional logics also provides a way for examining complexity, pluralism and heterogeneity. Multiple logics can create diversity in practices and can prompt contestation over which practices are appropriate (Powell and Bromley, 2013).

Some limitations exist with the consideration of the agency in institutional logics, the existence of the paradox of embedded agency has remained an issue and point of critique throughout the development of the institutional logics stream. There is room for the argument that individuals do not simply compete and negotiate but, like organisations, they can be in conflict and coordinate, but the conceptions of institutional logics only limitedly capture the agentic influence ‘within’ logics. Understanding society as a collection of institutional players jostling for dominance or survival whilst governed by differing and oftentimes competing logics allows for the discussion of the sources of heterogeneity and agency (institutional landscape), as well as the analysis of the contradictions between institutional logics within different institutional structures. This marks a move away from the isomorphic discussion of institutions and institutional logics towards an understanding of society as an inherently fractious, brittle and changeable phenomenon (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008).

Whilst there is evident consideration of historical context and contingency within the institutional logics perspective, the discussion of the duration of historical structures and the recognition of the importance of events in shaping longer term periods of history (Clemente, Durand and Roulet, 2017). What results is the discussion of institutional logics as situated in specific historical contexts with no consideration of their temporality and influence of relational and structural effects

over time and across multiple levels of analysis. The lack of consideration of temporality and influence becomes contradictory in relation to the fundamental arguments of institutional logics in that competing logics exist, but that some logics are more stable and durable than others (Soin and Huber, 2013). The explanation of differential stability and durability of elements of the logic is also somewhat lacking. This contradiction or lack also takes its toll empirically and methodologically. With a weak consideration of the influence of institutional logics over extended time periods, the clout of the empirical arguments and analysis presented diminishes significantly. The ‘issues in the understanding and theorization of institutional change and in how organizations participate in such change’ (Clemente, Durand and Roulet, 2017: 19). If I go back to the notion of the market logic, it is a logic in itself which is replete within conflicting and competing logics. In relating the market logic to neoliberalism, it has become something which encompasses competition, efficiency, ownership, the state, society and so on. So whilst yes, I may be able to use the historically contingent element of the institutional logics meta-theory to generally trace the origins of prevailing institutional logics within a given historical time period or cultural context, I am perhaps less able to determine why only certain elements of a logic may prevail and become contingent for the next dominant logic.

Institutional work has also allowed me to explore the notion of political work. Even in when reviewing the history of organisational institutionalism, little attention was given to the political consequences of institutional structures (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008), despite the work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) in making the connection between institutional processes and the interests of elites. Whilst institutional work does allow me to consider the political, it does not particularly allow for the

theorisation of political programmes as a whole, unless we take the political as an institution too.

In taking stock of this institutional literature review, I must consider institutional logics and institutional work in conjunction with one another. Whilst I have made some connections between the two streams of institutionalism at various points throughout this chapter, a challenge lies in integrating both into a coherent framework of analysis. This challenge has been recognised by Zilber (2013) who highlights that institutional logics and institutional work have respectively developed as their own distinct traditions with their own trajectories. Despite this, some similarities exist between the two, namely in the sense that in some way they seek to bridge the gap between structure and agency (something which neo-institutionalism has always in some way endeavoured to do) (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008). The main difference in the way in which each seek to do this comes from the perspective at which they try to do so, with institutional logics taking a more macro-level processes focusing upon the building blocks and structures of institutions, whilst institutional work focuses more so upon micro-level processes and practices (primarily through the lens of discursive practices) (Zilber, 2013). What these differences tend to do is give primary to different elements of analysis.

Zilber (2013) calls into question whether institutional logics and institutional work, with their respective frameworks, can actually be married into one coherent framework for analysis. The author argues that institutional logics appears to try to do too much in terms of covering all levels of analysis, whilst institutional work appears to assume that every act which is related to institutions is constituted as institutional work (Zilber, 2013). In reflecting upon this statement and my own work, I do to some extent agree with Zilber's comments and I acknowledge the difficulties

I have had in situating my work within a neo-institutional framework. This is not because my research problem and context are not suitable for an institutional change discussion, rather it has been difficult to ground my study in either the body of literature concerning logics or work as my case clearly encompasses both stream of literature. Zilber (2013) offers a solution to this positing that perhaps we should not view the logics and work framework as one cohesive framework, but rather frameworks which can work in tandem with another where at times in analysis, logics are at the forefront of discussion and in other moments, work is the focal point. This more generative view is encouraging, particularly as I move forward into the next chapter wherein I outline cultural political economy as an institutional approach.

### **Chapter 3: Cultural Political Economy and Institutional Theory**

The previous chapter was the first step in reviewing the literature pertaining to the overarching research question to *understand the changes that occurred in the British energy Market during (and to some extent, after) privatisation*. In the last chapter I discussed the utility of the institutional logics and institutional work as frameworks for explaining and understanding institutional change. This allowed for



the exploration of the way(s) in which organisations respond to multiple logics at the field-level, but also logics being replaced and new logics emerging as a result of environmental jolts. In my review of the institutional logics literature, I identified a tendency to perceive organisations as passive actors in the process of change. This led me to consider institutional work with its focus on agency and the various types of work (cultural, political and technological) actors can actively be involved in when changing, maintaining or disrupting institutions. The chapter concluded with challenges for institutional logics and institutional work in the context of the research questions at hand. These issues can be categorised into three key areas: the ontological conflicts between logics and work (tensions between structure and agency), here potential analytical problems arise in relation to the way in which logics and work are captured and also through whether logics or work are favoured in analysis; the former giving primacy to wider institutional structures and promoting the paradox of embedded agency (Battilana, 2006; Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum, 2009) and the latter focusing more so upon agency. The second issue relates to the unidirectional nature of institutional logics as a model which implies all change occurs through a linear or chronological fashion, when in reality change across multiple levels with multiple actors is far from linear and is more complex. Another key issue which arose from my review of the neo-institutional literature is that the consideration of political ideologies is somewhat limited. Whilst there is evidence of the analysis of tensions and struggles amongst actors and between dominant logics; some of the more prevalent old institutionalist ideas of power, politics and the interests of elites are less theorised. Perkmann and Spicer (2008) do consider political work in their categorisation of political, technical and cultural work, but this is on a more micro level. As I have argued, these categorisations of work can all be

considered with a political inclination, particularly where change is instigated from a more macro level of discussion. This is certainly the case for the privatisation of British energy markets (1979-2007) and organisations wherein change was predominantly emanated from political ideology of specific parties and governments.

With this in mind, the aim of this chapter is to introduce Cultural Political Economy (CPE) to extend the institutional logics and work approaches to overcome the abovementioned weaknesses in addressing my research question. More specifically, here, CPE will enable me to address the macro level discussion of change which is currently missing from the neo-institutional frameworks. CPE in general emphasises the importance and contribution of semiosis (sense- and meaning- making) in the analysis of the economic and the political as embedded in a broader set of social relations (Jessop, 2009a). CPE considers both history and institutions as important to the study of political and economic dynamics and it takes the idea of a cultural turn seriously for the understanding of the relations between meaning and practice (Jessop, 2004). Within the broader cultural turn in the study of the economy, there are multiple cultural turns, the different aspects of which manifest themselves differently across the various strands of CPE (Du Gay and Pryke, 2003; Calabrese, 2004; Aitken, 2007; Sheller, 2008; Best and Paterson, 2010). I will here consider and elaborate a specific variation of CPE in form of the work by Sum and Jessop (Jessop, 2010; Sum and Jessop, 2013). Sum and Jessop's CPE synthesises critical semiotic analysis with critical political economy. This synthesis is built upon an interest in capitalism, with its contradictions and crisis tendencies and the potential impact this has upon social relations. This variation of CPE encompasses Marxist thought, but unlike orthodox Marxism and orthodox economics (which tends to stress different moments of capital accumulation and treat it

objectively in analysis). Thus Sum and Jessop's CPE is Marxist inspired and stresses the way in which forces related to capital accumulation are tendential and contingent (Jessop, 2004).

This chapter particularly contributes to the development of a framework which enables me to address my second research question *what imaginaries are present during the privatisation of the British energy sector and which imaginary is hegemonic?* It also relates to the three sub-research questions: 2(a) *how did this imaginary come into being?* 2(b) *how does an imaginary change and evolve?* And 2(c) *how can an imaginary be translated into policy and legislation?* The importance of the concept of the imaginary is as such central to this chapter and for empirical discussion and analysis later within the thesis. As such I will work towards building an understanding of what is meant by the term "economic imaginary" (Jessop, 2013; Belfrage and Hauf, 2017), as well as situating this concept within other disciplines and perspectives such as the social (Taylor, 2004; Anderson, 2016), spatial (Wolford, 2004), climate related imaginaries (Levy and Spicer, 2013; Milkoreit, 2017). This dialogue concerning the economic imaginary will serve to set up the discussion of the political which becomes fundamental to the empirical analysis of the pre-, during and post-privatisations processes in the British energy sector.

Jessop (2012) and Sum and Jessop (2013) present CPE to be both a trans- and post-disciplinary research paradigm. This inter-disciplinary element involves researchers taking insights from other disciplines into account in their own research or converging on projects which bridge multiple disciplines. Its trans-disciplinary nature consists of the collaboration of researchers where the outcome is new knowledge, understanding or capabilities. Trans-disciplinary research involves working with complex systems and embraces said complexity whilst avoiding

reductionism. Sum and Jessop (2013) argue that the idea of a ‘complexity turn’ has aided them to develop their work as trans-disciplinary approach. CPE’s recognition of complexity generates two postulations. The first is that the task of social scientists is to produce theories or models which capture complex systems. The second relates to the idea that where complexity exists, individuals and other social forces must seek ways to reduce said complexity in order to ‘go on in the world’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 23). Complexity reduction here relates to the way in which individuals make sense of the world they live in.

CPE also makes claims to being post-disciplinary. This relates to its conception of institutions and institutional frameworks. Post-disciplinarity calls for the organisation of research around specific themes, struggles or problems rather than being confined to the traditional subject boundaries of existing boundaries. Indeed, CPE’s post-disciplinary perspective advances the blurring, even the abandoning, of disciplinary boundaries in the assumption that this barrier reduction will lead to more effective efforts in tackling research questions. Where CPE claims to be open to other disciplinary approaches; this may facilitate my bridging of institutional theory and CPE.

The chapter is outlined as follows: I will begin by addressing each element of CPE, that is, I will review what is meant by the economic, the political and finally, the cultural. In doing so and in presenting my review in this order, I will first address the economic element and explore the influences of the regulation approach in CPE; the regulation approach is key here as it allows for the consideration of institutions. Here I will also discuss ideas pertaining to economic activities, capitalism and markets, where I consider markets, I will also discuss the crises of capitalist markets. From here, I will move on to the political element of CPE. This will allow for the

review of the literature pertaining to the regulation of capitalism. In doing this, I am able to discuss neoliberalism more closely and the durability of capitalism. This is significant for my study as is concurrent with the idea that neoliberalism and capitalism remained so prevalent during the privatisation of British energy, despite the shortcoming and at times, obvious failure. In outlining the political, I am also able to elaborate upon the way in which actors are strategic and reflexively capable and I do this through the introduction of the strategic relational approach to structure-agency. The discussion of the political ultimately leads me to the Gramscian notion of hegemony and intellectuals (organic and traditional) and the ways in which hegemony is produced and contested. Finally, I will explore the cultural element of CPE. Specifically, I will demonstrate that CPE engages in a similar line of questioning as political economists, but has the added dimension of culture. This cultural dimension is more sensitive to wider societal perspectives and is more conscious of the semiotic nature of agents. The concept of the imaginary and semiosis (sense-and meaning-making) become crucial to my own empirical study.

### **3.1 The ‘economy’ in cultural political economy:**

The following sections will provide a review of the cultural political economic literature, with a specific focus upon the economic element. A clear influence upon Sum and Jessop’s (2013) CPE thesis is the regulation approach (RA). In Jessop’s earlier works, RA is described as a useful way by which we can analyse the interconnectedness of institutional forms and the regulation of capitalist economies (Jessop, 2001a). RA is significant to CPE as it is attune to the historically specific features of capitalism and avoids the naturalisation of capitalism and its continual reproduction (in a rational economic sense). This point is key as it harks back to the observations of De Cock, Fleming and Rehn (2013) relating to capitalism

as a transgressive and revolutionising force. RA is particularly interested in capitalism and its crisis-tendencies. In avoiding a wholly orthodox economic account of capitalism and its related forces, RA is more interested in understanding why capital accumulation, despite the moments of perceived crises of capitalism, is able to withstand moments of flux and continue for relatively extended periods of time (Jessop, 2001a). The interest in crisis-tendencies is crucial for RA as it focuses upon these crisis tendencies in a more generic sense, in relation to specific regimes of accumulation and frames these discussion in a wider exploration of crisis tendencies in relation to major ruptures and structural shifts in accumulation and regulation through class struggles (Jessop, 2001a).

It is this latter point relating to class struggles, which is of interest as it denotes a perception of economic activities and related institutions as embedded in a wider social setting. The inclusion of a consideration of a socially embedded economic activities and institutions further removes RA studies from orthodox economic studies, and argues that continued capital accumulation is not simply secured through orthodox economic mechanisms, but is also reliant upon social generative mechanisms (Jessop, 2001a). Thus RA allows for a

‘Retrospective account of the changing combinations of economic and extra-economic institutions, norms, and practices that help to secure, if only temporarily and always in specific economic spaces, a certain stability and predictability in economic conduct and accumulation- despite the fundamental contradictions and conflicts inherent in capitalism’ (Jessop, 2001a: 3).

The concept of extra-economic institutions deserves some attention here as it specifically relates to the notion social mechanisms, relations and struggles.

The exploration of the idea of the extra-economic activities/institutions can also be developed further in relation to capitalist markets and competition. In some of his earlier works Jessop (1998: 33) discusses this through the way in which ‘capital accumulation has come to depend more heavily on a wide range of extra-economic factors generated through other institutional orders on various spatio-temporal scales.’ In recognising this, Jessop (1998) moved the analysis of capitalist markets away from a more Ricardian perspective wherein the goal was to maximise the efficiency of different activities, to incorporating more Schumpeterian ideas wherein competitiveness possess more structural and systemic qualities (Jessop, 1993, 1998; Messner, 1996). So what relevance does this have to my own work? Well, recognising extra-economic factors signifies the recognition that competition (in my research context) is not solely down to efficiency maximising economic factors, but is also highly dependent upon extra- economic activities, institutions and relations. It denotes that there are clear interdependencies between economic and extra-economic factors which have a great bearing upon competition (Jessop, 1998). Given that we have established that we can discuss capital accumulation as having a wide range of spatio-temporal scales (Jessop, 1998) or socio-spatial activities (Glassman, 2006), we can ascertain that the interdependencies of economic and extra-economic activities and the bearing this has upon competition can have implications at many levels of analysis, whether this be at the level of the firm, the field or in the wider institutional or economic environment (Jessop, 1998).

### **3.2 The ‘political’ in cultural political economy:**

Having outlined the economic element of CPE, I now turn to the political element of CPE. The economic allowed for the review the consideration of capitalism, crisis tendencies of capitalist markets and economic activities. I now turn to the political to review the literature pertaining to the role of the state, governance mechanisms and the influence of politics. Within the following sections, I will evoke the neoliberal discussion I have briefly provided in chapter one and discuss the neoliberal ideology in relation to the crisis tendencies of capitalism, markets and regulation.

#### **3.2.1 Regulating capitalism:**

In discussing capital as an object of regulation, Sum and Jessop (2013: 277) argue that ‘capital relation cannot be reproduced entirely through market exchange and is therefore prone to ‘market failure’’. The mechanisms by which accumulation get regularised extend beyond the capitalist economy (i.e. production or market exchange) to include various extra-economic mechanisms. The extra-economic mechanisms help to reproduce the contradictions and dilemmas that are associated with capitalism and allow for the extension of analysis to include ideas relating to agency, semiosis, strategies and decision-making which contribute to the contradictions and dilemmas (Sum and Jessop, 2013).

Sum and Jessop (2013: 277-278) offer three reasons for the need to regulate capitalism:

‘The incompleteness of capital as a purely economic (or market-mediated) relation such that its continued reproduction depend, in an unstable and



contradictory way, on changing extra-economic conditions; Its various inherent structural contradictions and strategic dilemmas and their changing structural articulation and forms of appearance in different accumulation regimes, modes of regulation, and conjunctures; and conflicts over the regularization and/or governance of these contradictions and dilemmas as expressed in the circuit of capital and the wider social formation’

Marx (1967) argues that there is an inherent contradiction in the commodity in the difference between exchange- and user-value. Exchange-value relating to the market-mediated monetary value and use-value referring to the material and/or symbolical nature of the commodity to the user (Sum and Jessop, 2013). It is within this relation that contradictions and therefore variations of capitalism emerge.

The state has a responsibility to play within this relation, on the one hand they are expected to secure the condition for profitability in an exchange-value sense and on the other hand, the state has a political responsibility to ensure social cohesion (Sum and Jessop, 2013). These contradictions also have implications for wider social formations, thus as capitalism is reproduced, so too are societal structures and what this inevitably leads to is an ever-changing and variegated perception of capitalism (Sum and Jessop, 2013). Given the connection between contradictions and dilemmas of capitalism to wider social formations, there exists the ‘plurality of contradictions and interconnections’ where ‘the possibilities of handling them at different sites, scales and time horizons, etc., creates significant scope for agency, strategies and tactics to affect economic trajectories’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 281). Contradictions, or crises of capitalism are thus specific to their own spatial, institutional and social contexts

and also do not definitively shape the next phases of a crisis (Marx, 1973; Sum and Jessop, 2013). This latter point is significant because it particularly draws attention to the importance of specific institutional contexts. The crises with their own distinctiveness have their own specific modes of regulation and governance. They are articulated through, and related to specific institutional orders which signify specific modes of domination; the specific logics of institutions are crucial as they possess their own distinctive discursive and material elements which are particular to that moment of contradiction of capitalism (Sum and Jessop, 2013).

There is a spatio-temporal consideration in the analysis of institutions as Sum and Jessop (2013: 71) argue that

‘Institutions emerge in specific places and at specific times, operate on one or more scales and with specific temporal horizons, develop their own specific capacities to stretch social relations and/to compress events in space and time, and , hence, have their own specific spatial and temporal rhythms.’

The spatio-temporality feature of institutions are deliberate and constitutive properties which institutions and institutional orders from one another (this is also true for the impact spatio-temporality has upon organisations). The variations in spatio-temporalities also accounts for varying levels of power in a given space-time and aids the understanding and analysis of the various ways of organising and the institutionalisation of social interactions and the capacities of agents to ‘reproduce transform, or overturn institutions’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 71).

In taking stock of to the contradictions of capitalism, modes of regulation and economic and extra-economic factors, I will relate this further to the specific context of neoliberalism which is relevant to my work. With the inherent focus upon capital accumulation and the modes of regulation involved in the production and reproduction of capitalism, the RA brings out attention to the durability of capitalism and its various phases. In discussing the notion of economic and extra-economic activities or factors, I can begin to demonstrate how this presentation of capital accumulation can go beyond efficiency maximising economic discussion, to incorporate other institutions and societal factors and social struggles. Duménil and Lévy (2011) argue (in a similar fashion to Sum, Jessop and Glassman) that neoliberal capitalism cannot be understood in a purely economic sense. Additionally, when discussing the crisis of neoliberal capitalism, extra-economic factors must be taken into account including

‘The expression of the inner contradictions of a political strategy supported by basic national and international economic transformations, whose main objectives are the restoration and increase of the power, income, and wealth of upper classes’ (Duménil and Lévy, 2011: 1).

The sentiments expressed by Duménil and Lévy (2011) are relevant to my work as they begin to capture some of the contradictions in neoliberal capitalism that exist within my own work, specifically the focus upon contradictions in political strategy and power are of interest. Given the focus on extra-economic activities within this section and the way in which contradictions give rise to agency and strategy and the more structural and spatio-temporal elements of capital accumulation; the following section will focus specifically upon structure-

agency and the way in which they are discussed and analysed within Sum and Jessop's (2013) version of CPE.

### **3.2.2 Structure-agency and relationally:**

An important paradigm in Sum and Jessop's (2013) outlining of CPE is the strategic-relational approach (SRA) to structure-agency. SRA here relating to the state as a social relation which has influence upon political and economic strategies, wherein some strategies are privileged over others (Sum and Jessop, 2013). Much of existing work (and particularly the literature concerning institutional logics and institutional work) tends to bracket structure or agency, focusing upon the effects of one or the other (Giddens, 1991, 1994). This tends to lead to a 'mechanical' discussion so structure and agency, treating structure in isolation from agency and equally implying that structure is constraining or enabling for all actors and their related actions (Sum and Jessop, 2013). Similarly, actors are privileged and are treated as independent of structure. This discussion of structure-agency is also largely a-temporal and denotes that historical change occurs on a more linear basis and does not consider the complex nature of social structures and actors within different strategic positions (Sum and Jessop, 2013; Heras, 2018).

Sum and Jessop (2013: 56) quite simply in their CPE thesis state that 'to go beyond this duality is to examine structure in relation to action, action in relation to structure, rather than bracketing one of them. This statement is significant for the way in which I not only approach theorising and developing a conceptual framework, but also has analytical implications too. For if we are to treat structure-agency as strategically relational, we are recognising that structures are strategic in their form and content and actions are structured and context-sensitive. So when I apply the strategic-relational approach it is important to remember that I am

‘Examining how a given structure may privilege some actors, some identities, some strategies, some spatial and temporal horizons, some actions over others; and the ways in which actors (individuals and/or collective) take account of this differential privileging through ‘strategic-context’ analysis when choosing a course of action’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 56).

Sum and Jessop (2013) illustrate their conceptualisation of SRA (*see figure 2*) to demonstrate how we can go beyond the structure-agency duality. They do so to explicate how SRA can help move structure-agency analysis beyond determinism, fallacies and idealism (Sum and Jessop, 2013).

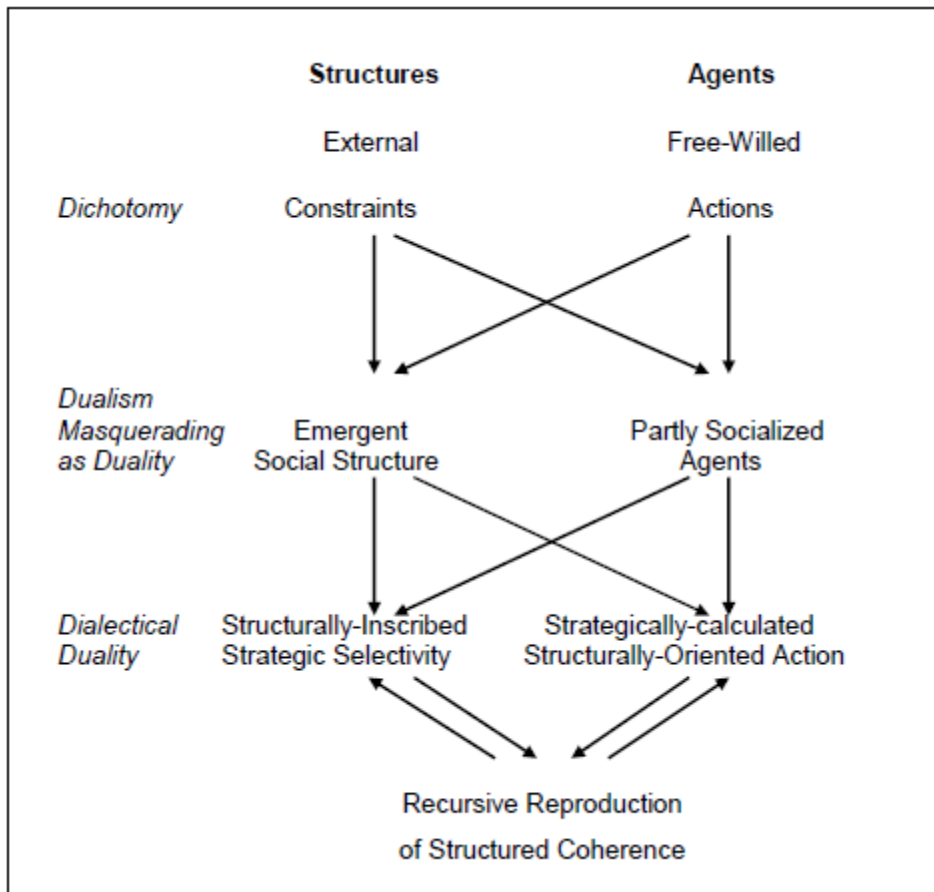


Figure 1 Structure-agency beyond structuration theory (Sum and Jessop, 2013)

Delving into *figure 2*, row one serves as the thesis and antithesis for the discussion of SRA and simply presents the structure-agency dichotomy. The second row is particularly related to the work of Giddens (1984) which further develops the structure-agency dichotomy despite arguing that structure is an emergent form action and action is structurally constrained or enabled by skilful action (however the bracketing effect remains in analysis) (Sum and Jessop, 2013). Rows three and four take into account the scholarship of Giddens which has come before them, but develops this further to encompass the analysis of social phenomena through social relations. A key element of the SRA frame for the discussion and analysis of structure-agency is including and allowing for the consideration of the capability of

actors (whether individual or collective) to reflect upon the strategic selectivities (see agency row three) ‘inscribed within structures so that they come to orient their strategies and tactics in light of their understanding of the current conjuncture’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 58). The consideration of reflexivity within the structure-agency relationship allows for the discussion of the way in which individuals and organisations possess the capabilities to reformulate and engage strategically, similarly the outlining of structure in row three illustrates that specific structures and configurations of structures can serve to support one particular action or strategy over another.

SRA allows for the possibility of the discussion of the reflexive reorganisation of structural configurations as well as the recursive nature of the selection of tactics and strategies. This reflexivity depends upon the learning capacities of individuals or collective actors and also to some extent, rely upon the way in which the implementation of different strategies and tactics within different structural conjunctures were experienced and perceived (Sum and Jessop, 2013). These final points are captured in row four of *figure 2*. Row four demonstrates the way in which Sum and Jessop’s conceptualisation of SRA has been influenced by the Foucault’s work relating to *dispositifs*. In understanding Foucault’s *dispositif* as ‘a certain physical, non-discursive or intellectual, discursive way of ordering, having ordered things in a certain domain, which makes a certain action/understanding in that domain possible’ (Callewaert, 2007: 30). In understanding *dispositif* as more of a condition of possibility, I can begin to better anticipate the way in which I can capture the reflexive nature and awareness of heterogeneous structural ensembles within the SRA discussion of structure-agency (Sum and Jessop, 2013).

The final row which conceptualises the recursive reproduction of structured coherence demonstrates the way in which ‘reflexively reorganized structural configurations and recursively selected strategies and tactics co-evolve to produce relatively stable order out of potentially unstructured complexity’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 59). This denotes the interaction between the reflexive reorganisation of strategic selectivities. Strategic selectivities are agential, structural, discursive and technological in nature and key to the strategies and tactics of actors (which are related to a particular institution or institutional ensembles) and the adoption or stabilisation of particular strategies and tactics which are geared towards those specific selectivities. What then this illustrates is the ‘structurally-inscribed strategic selectivity that rewards actions compatible with the recursive reproduction of the structure(s) in question’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 59). Structured coherence becomes an important factor in the relationality of structure-agency and it is relevant to my earlier outlining of capitalist accumulation regimes and regulation. These latter points also become important later within the chapter where I present the work of Antonio Gramsci (1971) and the evidence of a structured coherence discussion in his notion of the historical bloc. This notion of structured coherence will also be outlined in relation to various types of selectivities (also explored later within this chapter).

### **3.2.3 Political influences upon change and governance:**

I will now introduce the work of Antonio Gramsci, in particular focusing on notions of the historical bloc, hegemony and intellectuals (organic and traditional). Gramsci’s work is useful for my own, particularly when considering his ideas



relating to the ethico-political dimension of economic regimes; this consideration allows for the synthesis of previously discussed elements of RA, institutions and CPE. Gramsci (1971: 261-3) enables for the analysis of the assimilation of the state with ‘political society + civil society’ and the notion that state power is as a result of ‘hegemony armoured by coercion’. For Gramsci, the capitalist state is made up by the overlap of political society and civil society; the former which ruled through force and the latter, which rules through consent. Where civil society in more modern terms may relate to non-business and non-government bodies, for Gramsci, civil society related to the public sphere and was crucial as it represented a sphere in which ideas were shaped and where hegemony was reproduced through cultural life via various institutions such as the media, religious institutions and academic institutions (Gramsci, 1971; Heywood, 1994).

Within his work, Gramsci (1971) did not explicitly discuss institutions, but rather explored ideas relating to the way in which political, intellectual and moral leadership are arbitrated through the complex relations of institutions, organisations and their respective forces which operate within and/or for or towards them (Jessop, 1997). The relevance of this for my work is in the political influences upon change and in the processes of privatisation of British energy and the creation of a competitive market. What this initial reading of Gramsci suggests is that the political sphere of discussion is where

‘Attempts are made to (re-)define a ‘collective will’ for an imagined political community and to (re-)articulate various mechanisms and practices of government and *governance* in pursuit of projects deemed to serve it’ (Jessop, 1997: 52).

Where RA has mainly been concerned with a more comprehensive economic analysis of socially embedded capital relations and its phases of stability and/or instability, Gramsci (1971) was perhaps more concerned with the politics of society within this comprehensive economic analysis. This notion of politics in capitalist societies built upon Marxists underpinnings and reminds us of De Cock, Fleming and Rehn's (2013) discussion of organising revolutions and capitalism as a transgressive force.

Relating some of these ideas further to the neo-institutionalist bodies of literature, there are considerations and integrations of Gramsci's works within organisational institutionalism. These considerations typically coincide with the discussion of institutional entrepreneurs and institutional work. One paper of note which seemingly employs a Gramscian framework of analysis quite extensively is offered by Levy and Scully's (2007: 971) who seek to integrate Gramsci's concept of hegemony to 'understand the contingent stabilization of organisational fields, and by employing his discussion of the Modern Prince as the collective agent who organizes and strategizes counter-hegemonic challenges'. Whilst their incorporations of Gramscian concepts within a framework for analysis is encouraging for the scope of my own work, Levy and Scully's (2007) offer a fairly sterilised version of a Gramscian framework and this is down to multiple factors.

Levy and Scully (2007) draw upon Gramsci's account of Machiavelli's 'the prince as the modern prince' to develop a theory of strategic power to aid the understanding of institutional entrepreneurship. In building upon Gramsci's account of the war of position and the organic intellectual, Levy and Scully (2007) posit that they make three contributions to institutional entrepreneurship in that they consider the interrelated material, discursive and organisational dimensions of a field. They

argue that strategy must be analysed further in relation to the way in which entrepreneurs engage with field structures and finally, that the institutional entrepreneur represents a strategic force of power who can challenge those actors in dominant positions within a field (Levy and Scully, 2007). Whilst I am conscious that these authors implemented a Gramscian in a very different context to mine, with a slightly focus, their neglect of the class struggles inherent in Gramsci's work and also their lack of consideration of traditional intellectuals results with only a partial implementation of a Gramscian framework for analysis. What I am left with is a reductionist implementation of Gramscian concepts. The following sections will demonstrate the way in which I will avoid and overcome some of these shortcomings.

### **3.3 Political and cultural considerations in CPE:**

#### **3.3.1 The role of intellectuals:**

Within the outlining of the political element of CPE comes the question of who is responsible for producing hegemony and who are the dominant classes who have the capabilities to do so. There is also a question of who are those individuals and collectives who are able to procure counter-hegemonies which can either challenge dominant hegemonies, or in moments of variation and crisis, articulate such counter-hegemonies with the hopes of subsequent selection and retention. For Gramsci (1971) these individuals or collective actors were either organic or traditional intellectuals who are responsible for the diffusion of an 'organic ideology' at various levels of a society (i.e. political society or civil society).

To Gramsci, everybody is an intellectual as we all contribute to the construction, reproduction and circulation of ideas. Nevertheless, he highlights two types of intellectuals, which are of central importance to hegemony: the organic intellectual and the traditional intellectual. Intellectual groups all have their roots within basic economic relations but Gramsci's definition of intellectuals serves to make it clear that there is a clear distinction between organic and traditional intellectuals (Olsaretti, 2013). Perhaps the most distinctive element of difference between organic and traditional intellectuals is their relation to social class; organic intellectuals emerge from a particular social class and possess and develop particular knowledge that is directly linked to occupational specialisations, as well as political knowledge that represents and drives their class interests (Gramsci, 2003). The organic intellectual essentially grows organically alongside the dominant social group and organic intellectuals are thus very conscious that their actions are highly politicised. This is in contrast to traditional intellectuals who adhere to no particular class and in fact are relatively autonomous as they are not as directly linked to the economic structure or productive functions of their particular society as their organic counterparts (Ramos, 1982; Olsaretti, 2013).

Whilst traditional intellectuals are presented as autonomous and 'independent of the dominant social group' (Gramsci, 2003: 7), they are nevertheless products of historical and contemporary class relations. These traditional intellectuals appear autonomous and independent given their sense of continuity within society despite the crisis and shocks which have been felt. Furthermore, intellectuals are mediated by a 'complex of superstructures of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the functionaries' (Gramsci, 2003: 12). For Gramsci, the traditional intellectual was seen

as crucial as they were perceived to be the dominant group's deputies, the foot soldiers so to speak of hegemony (Olsaretti, 2013).

In exploring the organic ideology, I will introduce the concept of organic and traditional intellectuals into the analysis of institutional change. Organic ideologies are produced and formulated by organic intellectuals related to an existing hegemonic or potentially hegemonic class. These organic intellectuals articulate an organic ideology or organising principle by unifying ideological elements from discourse to produce a 'unified' ideological system or hegemonic principle-the imaginary. Traditional intellectuals are typically more associated with civil society and are more likely to act on the ground as 'foot soldiers' in achieving mass consensus and consent for social order. Traditional intellectuals however can also be associated with organic ideology and in a sense work for those organic intellectuals and become supportive agents in achieving hegemony. This latter point will become crucial to my own analysis as many of those individuals can be considered as traditional intellectuals were actually appointed by the hegemonic class associated with the organic ideology.

### **3.4 The 'cultural' in cultural political economy:**

In this section I provide a broad outline of CPE as a trans- and post-disciplinary research paradigm, and what types of questions does this approach seek to answer? CPE serves a useful complementary purpose to other theories and methods that in conjunction allow for the examination of the interrelations of political economy in its broadest sense, semiosis, imaginaries, governance, regulation, government and governmentality (CPERC, 2018). Whilst CPE is applied

mainly as its name denotes to political economy, its general propositions relating to sense- and meaning-making can be applied in any analysis with similar principles with an interest in social forms and institutional dynamics (Sum and Jessop, 2013). CPE has emerged out of the wider ‘cultural turn’ within the social sciences, but rather than simply adding a cultural element to political economy, it serves to challenge the more traditionally positivist epistemologies in research through its consideration of complex issues such as gender, identity and discourse within complex systems.

What makes CPE more distinguishable from political economy is the inclusion of culture<sup>5</sup> Sum and Jessop (2013) argue that their approach (amongst other cultural political economists) takes into account and respond to the various institutional and cultural turns within political economy. Institutional turns are something I will discuss later within the chapter, but for now my focus is on the cultural. The following two sections will serve to aid the understanding of what is meant by the term culture (from a CPE perspective), how this relates to other cultural turns both within CPE and organisation studies and finally how the cultural relates to political economy. I will do this not only to provide a more encompassing understanding of CPE generally, but also to demonstrate why I am utilising Sum and Jessop’s version of CPE. What is more, demonstrating how CPE belongs to the wider institutionalist literature illustrates the way in which the neo-institutionalist approach can be challenged and extended through the consideration and inclusion of key concepts in CPE.

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<sup>5</sup> But this is not to say that political economy does not consider culture, it perhaps does so in a less explicit within the analysis of phenomena.

### **3.5 Culture in political economy:**

Before I embark on the review of Sum and Jessop's (2013) version of CPE, I would first like to offer the reader a brief overview of other streams of discussion which fall under the label of cultural political economy or cultural economy. I do this because it is useful to have the broader picture of what CPE approaches aim to explain and understand, in doing this I not only endeavour to demonstrate how CPE differs from classical political economy approaches, but also so that I can distinguish Sum and Jessop's approach and its utility and appropriateness to answering research questions 2-2(a).

Best and Paterson (2010: 2) view the study of CPE as established through 'the cultural dimensions of the economy, the economic aspects of culture, and the political character of both,' as key vectors of social life. They draw on Karl Polanyi's notion of the 'disembedding' of markets as an account of the separation of cultural, political and economic elements. Polanyi argues that before market society, economic practices were closely tied to social norms and values, but with the advent of the self-regulating market, such values and traditions were displaced to allow for the logic of the market to emerge (Polanyi, 1944). The resulting separation between the cultural, political and economic in such discussions has been maintained by economists, but Best and Paterson (2010) argue that these efforts are often contradicted where cultural themes are evoked with the discussion of ideas such as family values, ethics and gender. From this, Best and Paterson (2010) suggest that the notion of the 'disembedding' of market by Polanyi (1944) is flawed, and what we have seen is reconstitution of the contents of culture and that a 'culture-free' economy is an impossibility. Belfrage (2012) offers a similar discussion through the consideration of the notion of 'aestheticisation' and the role it plays in the

reproduction of capitalism. Aestheticisation has served to ‘to strengthen, not challenge, the popular legitimacy of capitalist norms and practices’ and within this argument, is particularly linked to the role consumer culture has played in the advancement of capitalist economies (Belfrage, 2012: 155).

Best and Paterson (2010: 3) describe their approach to CPE as aiming to rediscover the cultural elements of political economy through enriching

‘Debates about the central practices of contemporary life that have been deadened by the insistence that ‘the economy’ can be analysed without reference to specific sorts of people which inhabit and produce it (its cultures), the forms of power embedded in it (its politics) and the normative questions which animate it ‘in itself’ and reactions to it.’

The idea of discussing those which inhabit the economy when analysing culture is something that is also captured by DuGay and Pryke (2003) and Amin and Thrift (2004). For these authors, there is significance in the discussion of economic life, particularly in the asymmetries which exist in the opportunities for people across the globe. With this, there is a need for the rejection of traditional models of economic life to fully capture the true complexity and dynamics of the economy. This also has implications for the study of culture and will directly determine the meanings given to social life and associated material objects (Best and Paterson, 2010).

Amin and Thrift’s (2004) provide an overview and categorise approaches to cultural (political) economy. Six approaches with their own distinct themes emerge and are identified as: passion, moral sentiments, knowledge, evolution, power and symptoms. Whilst Amin and Thrift (2004) outline these categories as



approaches, I would be more inclined to discuss them as overarching themes or research interests as they draw out specific points of interests or units of analysis within research projects; in this way, these 'approaches' act more as guiding principles for discussion and analysis.

The first approach relating to passions emphasises notions of subliminal energies and the libidinal and quick acting nature of capitalism (Hardt and Negri, 2001), as well as the discussion of obsessional consumption found in the works Bataille (1985) which illuminates the excessive nature of accumulation. The second of the approaches, outlined by Amin and Thrift (2004) as the moral sentiments approach, is distinct in itself, but nevertheless overlaps with the notion of passions. Here discussion can relate to the moral order of conventions, ethical economies and the constructed nature of economies. The moral sentiments approach is one which is evident in current economic discourse and is represented in discussions of the ethical dimension of practices in the everyday economy to highlight the way in which ethical justifications inevitably underpin economic practices (Amin and Thrift, 2004).

Power is another key aspect of the cultural economy approach and in more contemporary approaches (Amin and Thrift, 2004), power is demonstrated through discursive narratives and can be found in the works of authors such as Foucault (1986) and Rose (1999). Power is demonstrated through what is described as the narration of the economy. Narration of the economy can occur through means such as stories and advertising wherein the form of narration which takes place acts as a cultural template in becoming powerful. This cultural template can serve to acquire allies and enrol those with a shared vision, whilst simultaneously acting as a warning for any competitors (Pine and Gilmore,

1999). The other way in which power through discourse can be discussed within the cultural economy approach is through the way in which economic subjects form; these individuals are subject to particular discourses, but also have a hand in creating them (Amin and Thrift, 2004).

It must be noted that the variations of cultural turns (discussed above as thematic, methodological, ontological and reflexive) are not something which are novel or unique to political economy. The need for the inclusion of cultural dimensions in analysis has been recognised in several academic disciplines from anthropology, sociology, geography (Best and Paterson, 2010) and more pertinent to my work, in organisation studies. In organisations studies more generally, there has been continuous interest and efforts in defining the term sense-making; much of the pioneering work on sense-making in organisation studies is offered by Weick (1969, 1993). Other key authors have foundationally contributed to the idea of sense-making to explore meaning-making in the study of actors daily routines and practices (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Garfinkel, 1967; Polanyi, 1967). Sense- and meaning-making have since developed in organisations studies to explore the concept through discourse (Bolander and Sandberg, 2013), politics and power (Zilber, 2007) and identity (Karreman and Alvesson, 2001).

Bringing the 'cultural' into research is also something which has been explored somewhat in the previous chapter of this thesis. Within the discussion of the ontological facets of institutional logics, I covered topics concerning historical contingency and the cultural and material elements of logics, whilst in institutional work I discussed the role of actors and the types of work they carry out (most notably here, 'cultural work'); the former denoting the ontological cultural turn and the latter a more thematic. Having broadly outlined the types of cultural turns which exists and

the way in which both organisational studies, CPE and my own research recognise cultural turns, I now need to demonstrate how culture actually relates to political economy in practice.

### **3.5.1 Relating the ‘cultural’ to political economy:**

In relating the cultural to political economy, it is worth considering the kinds of questions political economy as a broad discipline traditionally asks. Best and Paterson (2010:1) outline some of these questions as

‘How do we explain the World Bank’s increasing emphasis on the social underpinnings of economic development? Or the ways that the social consequences of the tourism industry have recently been contested and ‘ethical tourism’ has emerged in response? Or the shift in the meaning of home ownership from a dwelling to an investment with consequent effects on consumer debt, home improvement spending, and asset prices?’

Several more of the political-economic style questions are posed by the authors but the conclusion they both come to is that traditional political-economic analysis often overlooks essential aspects of these research problems, the missing link being the acknowledgement of a cultural dimension. Indeed we can go beyond some of these rhetorical questions and relate the cultural in political economy to research, for example, in discussing the rise of the financialised global economy we can go beyond the idea of global finance and the discussion of traditional financial institutional structures (i.e. the World Bank or the IMF),

to discuss the financialisation of the everyday which incorporates the household and the individual as investing subjects (Aitken, 2006; van der Zwan, 2014).

There is a cultural discussion to be had in the discussion of the political shift to neoliberalism which has developed through a ‘series of cultural conflicts’ between consumerism and the power of labour in legitimising the neoliberal agenda (Hall and Jacques, 1989; Gamble, 1996; Best and Paterson, 2010: 1). What is clear from this is that the notion of the culture is embedded within our daily practices at both a micro and macro level, that it is insufficient to discuss such topic from the one-sided perspective of political economy. Indeed, authors from a more organisational perspective have noted something similar in that ‘sensemaking and organization constitute one another’ (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005: 410) in that it has become something that is ‘so enmeshed in our conceptions, theories and studies of organizing’ (Brown, Colville and Pye, 2015: 267). Again, I can draw upon the work of Belfrage (2012) and his discussion of aestheticisation and consumer culture and the role this has played in shaping capitalist economies; here the analysis of capitalist economies is very much akin to classical political economy, but the inclusion of an added level of analysis (the consumer) provides a more culturally inclined perspective upon a classical discussion.

The ideas of consumerism, financialisation and neoliberalism as interrelated concepts which are essential to a political economy discussion (and the two previous examples). This is crucial to my own research, as the reader will see in this chapter and for the rest of the thesis. These three concepts have arguably been reduced to the notion of the ‘rational pursuit of self-interest’ within (global) political economy literature and order, when in reality they have

complex and heavily intertwined underpinnings wherein the notions of ‘rationality’ and ‘self-interest’ are ever evolving and take on new meaning (Best and Paterson, 2010).

### **3.5.2 Culture and semiosis:**

Having provided a brief overview of the general direction CPE approaches take and determining the way in which these various approaches employ the cultural turn, I will now focus upon the version of CPE that is employed in this thesis. Sum and Jessop (2013) begin their discussion of culture by introducing the term semiosis. Semiosis in its simplest form is sense- and meaning-making. Semiosis provides crucial analytical tools and concepts which allow for the discussion of traditionally political economy style topics such as capital accumulation in relation to the wider social formations within which it is embedded. Culture here can be defined as ‘the ensemble of social processes by which meanings are produced, circulated and exchanged’ (Thwaites, Davis and Mules, 1994:1) and herein lies the consistency with Sum and Jessop’s (2013) definition of semiosis; there is an overarching concern with social processes. In dissecting semiosis further, the authors argue that:

‘Sense-making refers to the role of semiosis in the *apprehension of the natural and social world* and highlights the referential value of semiosis, even if this is to unrealized possibilities, the ‘irreal’, immaterial or virtual entities’. *Meaning-making* refers to processes of signification and meaningful communication and is more closely related, but not restricted, to *the production of linguistic meaning*’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: x).

The focus upon semiosis further serves to highlight some of the distinguishing characteristics of CPE. Semiosis contributes to the principles of the co-constitution and co-evolution of social objects and social subjects as related to their wider social setting and relations (Jessop, 2004). The traditional political economy literature tends to offer more reductionist accounts of subjects and subjectivities, the way in which they are formed and the various way in which they emerge and become institutionalised or evolve.

Sum and Jessop (2013) also offer the consideration of the extra-semiotic in their outlining of semiosis. This is where Sum and Jessop's version of CPE differs from others in that it is concerned with capitalist social formations and is concerned with the key mechanisms which contribute to the co-evolution of the semiotic and extra-semiotic elements of political economy (Jessop, 2004) (I will explore these key mechanisms further within the chapter on both a more abstract and concrete level of discussion and analysis). If semiosis relates to the sense- and meaning-making capabilities of actors, then the extra-semiotic refers to the more material practices and structural properties. De Cock, Fleming and Rehn (2013: 108) echo some of these sentiments and remind us that capitalism (from Marxist standpoint), 'is an inherently transgressive force, perpetually agitating, disrupting, and dissolving; it is a system which can survive only by constantly revolutionizing its own conditions'.

A question here is whether discussing culture as semiosis and the extra-semiotic is enough to capture what culture is? Another question is whether sense- and meaning- making are distinct enough concepts in themselves to be applied further into analysis? When talking about culture within CPE we must turn to the discussion of cultural turns to begin to answer these questions. Sum and Jessop

(2013) provide some considerations of this and outline four types of cultural turns which can be identified as: thematic, methodological, ontological and reflexive. In the context of political economy, a thematic cultural turn draws attention to previously neglected themes. A methodological cultural turn proposes ‘a new entry-point into the analysis of economic subjectivity, activities, institutions, or dynamics (e.g. constructivist accounts of the financialization of everyday life)’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 19).

An ontological cultural turn ascribes that economic order is always meaningful in its action and thus the explanation of an economic phenomena must be mindful of meaning as well as causality. Finally, a reflexive cultural turn refers to the way in which one or more of these previously stated turns are applied to economic analyses (Sum and Jessop, 2013). In discussing semiosis alongside cultural turns, Sum and Jessop (2013: 73) argue that within a methodological cultural turn ‘sense- and meaning- making provide a useful entry-point for studying a research or policy problem- but move beyond semiosis as the analysis develops’ implying that culture can provide new insights into the social world. In an ontological cultural turn, ‘sense- and meaning-making are foundational to society: without semiosis there is no society’, this implying that semiosis is foundational to the discussion of culture (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 73). I take slight issue with this as culture cannot simply be reduced to semiosis, and whilst a goal of Sum and Jessop’s CPE is to reduce the complexity of a chaotic world, this feels too simplistic. What is more, Sum and Jessop (2013: 4) say that ‘semiosis must be linked to the extra-semiotic.’ This sentiment has also been touched upon by van Heur (2010) who argues that actually, within Sum and Jessop’s work there is a distinct emphasis on the need to distinguish between the semiotic and extra-semiotic dimensions of the social world and this

emphasis is bound to lead to confusion as both the semiotic and extra-semiotic co-constitute one another. Van Heur(2010) argues that a way in which we can overcome this confusion is through the empirical investigation of the way in which the semiotic can become extra-semiotic.

### **3.5.2.1 Semiosis, structuration and complexity reduction:**

Related to the structured and strategically inscribed nature of the structure-agency relationship presented through SRA are the notions of structuration and compossibility. These two terms refer to the ‘enforced selection that sets limits to compossible combinations of relations among relations within specific time-space envelopes’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 4). (Jones and Jessop, 2010: 1120) present compossibility in a socio-spatial sense deeming that ‘not everything that is possible is compossible’. This is a fairly abstract introduction to the notion of compossibility, but what this essentially means is that forms societalisation and social relations are not always compatible with one another (Heras, 2018). Discussing compossibility in a critical realist sense (as is presented in Sum and Jessop’s CPE), compossibility can be discussed in relation to the *real*, the actual and the *empirical*. The real relates to the generative mechanisms which produces events, the actual are those events which have been generated and the empirical are observable phenomenon (Leca and Naccache, 2006)

Compossibility goes beyond the analysis of what is possible through *real* causal mechanisms, to focus upon the level of the *actual*. By doing so, compossibility allows for the discussion of the diversity of causal mechanism within



a specific spatio-temporal field of analysis (Jones and Jessop, 2010). By focusing upon the compossibility at *actual* level and the diversity of fields, the multiplicity of causations and possibilities in reaching end-goals. Furthermore, I am also able to discuss the notion of impossibility (i.e. the incompatibility) of societalisation (Jones and Jessop, 2010; Sum and Jessop, 2013). So how does this link to my preceding outlining of critical political economy? Well in exploring compossibility, I am likely to find that the levels of incompatible relations are higher than those which are compatible, this can be linked to earlier ideas of struggles, contradictions and tensions, particularly within my earlier discussion of the economic and extra-economic factors of capital accumulation (Jones and Jessop, 2010).

In linking compossibility to structuration and back to the earlier outlining of semiosis, Sum and Jessop (2013) argue that an ontological distinction must be made between the two. To some extent, this is to avoid the limiting dichotomy perspective (similar to the arguments relating to structure-agency), but to another extent, it is also to recognise that within the social sciences and the study of societies, the articulation of cultural and social structures must be explored without privileging one over the other and without implying that one creates the other. By acknowledging the concept of structuration, I am more conscious of the fact that these cultural symbols exist within a social structure that has a hierarchy and therefore, varying kinds of social relations which has implications for the knowledge, perception and use of culture and symbols (Geertz, 1975; Sum and Jessop, 2013). These latter points provide several points of discussion for the compatibility of neo-institutionalism and CPE as an institutional framework. Where there is convergence between CPE and institutional logics/work is perhaps through the acknowledgement of cultural symbols and with the idea that there exists a wider social (or institutional) structure. A point of

divergence between the two is the consideration of hierarchy and relations, again this harking back to the relative importance CPE and critical political economy places upon the idea of struggle, contradiction and tension.

### **3.5.3 The concept of the imaginary:**

Given that, so far this chapter has outlined semiosis and extra-semiotics practices, as well as economic and extra-economic factors. I now need to explore how the processes through which a semiotic system shapes the lived experience of individuals and collectives (Sum and Jessop, 2013). To do so I will now introduce one of the key concepts of this thesis, the imaginary. Learning from Jessop (2012b), he introduces the concept of the imaginary as a ‘sort of mental map’ of a complex reality:

Purely representational accounts of an external reality; many actually help to construct the reality that they purport to map. Indeed, imaginaries often include prospective as well as descriptive elements, anticipating or recommending new lines of action, that may guide present and future (non)decisions and (in)actions in a world pregnant with possibilities (Jessop, 2012b:17).

Thus, an imaginary acts as one of many entry-points in explaining and understanding complex reality and, in line with the idea that it shapes lived experience, can ‘frame and contain’ conflict, struggle, policy tensions and the like (Jessop, 2012b; Sum and Jessop, 2013). Economic imaginaries form an important part of Sum and Jessop’s (2013) CPE thesis, and in my own work will begin to play a central role in determining, privileging and stabilising economic activities within economic

relations in the unfolding narrative of the privatisation in the British energy industry from 1979 (Jessop, 2013; Sum and Jessop, 2013).

However, Sum and Jessop's (2013) outlining of economic imaginaries is not the only discussion of imaginaries to exist. Indeed the concept of the imaginary has a long and rich history and usage in sociology, psychology as well as organisation studies and has appeared in various forms through 'national-cultural imaginaries' (Ivy, 1995); 'spatial imaginaries' (Handler, 2004); 'climate imaginaries' (Levy and Spicer, 2013); 'techno-scientific imaginaries' (Marcus, George, 1995); and 'modern social imaginaries' (Gaonkar, 2002; Taylor, 2004) to name a few. In the following sections, I will outline some of the varying perspectives of the imaginary, covering seminal works by Benedict Anderson, Charles Taylor, Lacan, Castoriadas, eventually leading to a fuller review of Sum and Jessop's economic imaginary. The goal here is to introduce the concept in some of its multiple forms to better explicate not only its utility to my research, but also to serve as a bridge of connection between organisational scholars and political economists, thus making further connections (and also possible disconnections) between neo-institutional theory and CPE (as per RQ3).

### **3.5.3.1 Perspectives on the imaginary:**

#### **3.5.3.1.1 Psychology and the imaginary as fantasy:**

One of the perhaps more abstract readings of the imaginary is found in Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory encompassing a trio of terms including the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. Lacan's perspective of the imaginary emerges from a Marxian tradition which places emphasis on the imaginary as illusion (Marx's influence can be found in Lacan's use of the term alienation and his reference to

dialectical materialism) and demonstrates Freudian influences where illusion is treated as a form of fantasy which satisfies psychological needs (Strauss, 2006). Lacan viewed personalities as ‘constructed in social and cultural relations, as fundamentally *inter-subjective*’ (Strauss, 2006: 327). The desires of an individual from a Lacanian perspective are structured by language and symbolic systems; essentially a desire cannot exist if an individual has not encountered the language and symbols associated with said desire (Lacan, 1977; Strauss, 2006).

Despite this focus upon symbolic constitutions, Lacan was not in the full belief that the psychology of an individual was simply constructed through symbols or language. For Lacan, the trio of terms: the symbolic, imaginary and the real (Lacan, 1977) become important for the discussion of the imaginary and fantasy and consideration of all three are crucial for the understanding of an individual’s personality. The triptic idea of the symbolic-real-imaginary represent various levels of psychic phenomena, the trio serve to situate subjective ideas with perception and puts it in conversation with the external world (Loos, 2002). A simple definition of the imaginary for Lacan is that the imaginary is a fantasy, here this definition learns from its Freudian roots where the fantasy is formed by the proverbial child, a ‘transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image’ (Lacan, 1977: 2). The imaginary is the individual’s image of an ideal and whole self, it can be aligned with Freud’s notion of the formation of the ego which navigates (Loos, 2002; Strauss, 2006), or mediates between the ‘internal and external world’ (Vogler, 2001:2).

The symbolic contrasts to the imaginary in that it involves the formation of signifiers and language. In considering the symbolic, we begin to see the

manifestation of both conscious and unconscious signifiers (Loos, 2002). Lacan argues that ‘Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him...’ (Lacan, 1956: 42) and that ‘Man speaks therefore, but it is because the symbol has made him man’ (Lacan, 1956: 39). The symbolic thus represents how the individual is organised and how their psyche and their (un)conscious becomes accessible (Loos, 2002).

For Lacan, symbols and imaginaries obscured the *real*. The real here is not an easy concept to define, even Lacan himself is not clear about the term (Strauss, 2006). The real is something which transcends the symbolic, it is something which underlies the symbolic and may be felt as a presence, it is something which exists and knowingly exists among individuals beyond verbalisation (Strauss, 2006). Lacan’s reading of the imaginary perhaps does work more on a psychological plane; it theorises the relationship between the individual’s psyche and society wherein individuals build their personality from social symbols and images (Strauss, 2006). From this more psychological perspective, the imaginary can be taken as the fantasy of a specific person and indeed, Lacan’s theories were based upon the study of individual personalities. Whilst this psychological perspective of the imaginary-symbolic-real does not appear to immediately fit with the case of the privatisation of the British energy market, it is applicable in some specific sense wherein the initial conceptualisation of the market could be classed as the fantasy of one individual who then went on to inform Thatcher (Keith Joseph and the inception of the social market economy).

There are some potential issues in the application of Lacan’s ideas. Lacan’s understanding of symbols is heavily rooted in structuralist roots of thinkers such as

Saussure and Jakobson (Strauss, 2006). This structuralist theory of symbols can be problematic given the notion of binary oppositions within structuralism; this can lead to the oversight of the historical contingency and often only partial coherence of the symbols (Strauss, 2006). Furthermore, an individual's imaginary and notion of the symbolic should be considered as distinct from socially shared symbols (Strauss, 2006). The following sections seek to understand the imaginary from sociological, organisational and institutional perspectives.

### **3.5.3.1.2 The imaginary, imagined communities and cultural models:**

The sociological historian Benedict Anderson (2016) uses the term 'imagined community' to analyse nationalism, and defines a nation as an imagined political community wherein members of a particular community may not know each other, but identify as part of the same nation: they share a social imaginary, which shapes behaviour, values and beliefs. This focus spread beyond one single group, the concept of the nation particularly developed in line with the rise of print media (i.e. newspapers and books) and enabled a reader to feel a sense of belonging to a larger community; similarly the notion of imagined communities paralleled with readers who access a wider community through different languages and a focus upon different concerns (Anderson, 1983, 2016). Anderson (1983: 65) further distinguishes this new consciousness of groups

'What I am proposing is that neither economic interest, Liberalism, nor Enlightenment could, or did, create *in themselves* the *kind*, or shape, of imagined community to be defended from these regimes' depredations; to put it another way, none provided the framework of a new consciousness-

the scarcely seen periphery of its vision- as opposed to centre-field object of its admiration or disgust’.

This idea of the ‘framework of a new consciousness’ fits with the concept of cultural models where there exist shared or implicit representations, as opposed to explicit ideologies (although cultural models can be the source of explicit ideologies (Strauss, 2006)

The work of Taylor (2002, 2004) built upon Anderson’s works and moves away from the idea of the imagined collective of social life. Taylor's (2002) work on *Modern Social Imaginaries* is particularly focused upon the idea of the plurality of modernity in the social sciences. What is of note within Taylor’s work is the idea of multiple modernities of the (Western) world and, therefore, the existence of multiple social imaginaries, reflecting the plurality of the modern world and the limited capabilities of generalising or collective theories to enable our understanding of the complex modern world and the individuals, groups and organisations that exist within this world.

Taylor (2004) argues that a social imaginary goes beyond social theory. The social imaginary is broader in depth than traditional social intellectual schemes as it entails the way in which individuals ‘imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations’ (Taylor, 2004: 23). On the differences between social theory and social imaginaries, Taylor (2004) argues that the way in which people imagine the world they live in is not captured or expressed in theoretical terms, rather it pronounces itself via images, stories and legends, this also then allows for a greater focus on larger groups of society and the imaginary in practices and processes that

gives them a shared sense of legitimacy, as compared to the micro lens often offered by theoretical perspectives.

Whilst Taylor (2002, 2004) and Anderson (2016) have pioneered the discussion of social imaginaries, there are some shortcomings to their work, particularly that of Taylor. Taylor does note that modernism was led by elites with new social and economic theories during the emergence of capitalism, but his work suggests that social imaginaries play out in an ideational realm and as a result 'his account lacks an appreciation for their embodiments in political institutions and forms of economic life' (Levy and Spicer, 2013: 661). Within their analysis of climate imaginaries, Levy and Spicer (2013) explore the work of Bob Jessop (2010) concerning the development of CPE and the concept of the economic imaginary to address some of the shortcomings identified in Taylor's work. Jessop's work recognises that imaginaries are linked to economic and political systems and that the development of new economic regimes rely upon the exercising of 'political, intellectual, and moral leadership' (Jessop, 2010: 348). So social imaginaries alone do not construct communities and intellectual frameworks, it is the strategic struggle which requires actors to 'articulate strategies, projects and visions oriented to these imagined economies' wherein multiple groups, organisations, political parties, the media and the like that also play a fundamental role 'in mobilizing elite and/or popular support behind competing imaginaries' (Jessop, 2010: 345-346).

#### **3.5.3.1.3 The social imaginary and institutions:**

Building on the cultural aspect of the imaginary, Cornelius Castoriadis also keeps the 'social imaginary' central to his thesis. Castoriadis (1987) however places greater emphasis upon the idea of creativity and the role of creative ideas in his



conceptualisation of the imaginary (Strauss, 2006). Castoriadis emphasises imaginative capacity arguing that the imaginary is ‘the capacity to see in a thing what it is not, to see it other than it is’ (Castoriadis, 1987: 127). The imaginary from this perspective can be split into varying levels: the radical imaginary relates to the capacity to imagine, the actual imaginary is the result of what has been imagined and finally, the social imaginary is the actual imaginary of society (Castoriadis, 1987; Strauss, 2006). This conceptualisation of the imaginary is relevant to my work as it begins to take into account not only symbolic signifiers, but also goods, institutions and also the notion of the shared ethos of a group (this is something I explore further within this chapter through hegemony). Castoriadis (1987:23) also develops some critique of economic determinism

‘No technical fact has an assignable meaning if it is isolated from the society in which it is produced and none imposes a univocal and ineluctable sense to the human activities that it underlies....At a distance of only a few kilometres, in the same jungle, with the same weapons and instruments, two primitive tribes develop social structures and cultures as dissimilar as possible.’

For Castoriadis, the imaginary is a not only a potential source of creativity, but also creates the possibility for the emancipation of individuals and societies; what is more, imaginaries can also be a potential source for alienation when they manifest and take momentum within institutions (Strauss, 2006).

The social imaginary is key for Castoriadis as it represents the ethos of a group with shared and unifying core concepts (Ivy, 1995). This focus upon unity is perhaps where my case and Castoriadis’ view diverge slightly; for him, the focus was upon unification rather than multiplicity wherein there was the held belief that ‘we cannot understand a society outside of a unifying factor that

provides a signified content and weaves it with symbolic structures' (Castoriadis, 1987: 160). Whilst this idea of unity does hold true for some parts of the narrative relating to the privatisation of the British energy industry, I will demonstrate within the empirical chapters (particularly chapter 6) that this unity or significance often occurred in moments of crisis, for example war. What I endeavour to demonstrate is that this unity was often short lived where multiple imaginaries emerged, here is where the notion of multiplicity develops.

I focus on Castoriadis here as his ideas encompass some of the perspectives of the imaginary already discussed and still to come; Castoriadis was an economist, social theorist and a practising psychoanalyst. His background has an interesting effect on the way in which he viewed the imaginary as working on two levels: the individual and the societal. In viewing the imaginary on these two levels, Castoriadis (1987) notes a key difference between the two, this being that societal imaginaries become and are institutionalised

'It is a machine gun, a call to arms, a pay check and high-priced essential goods, a court decision and a prison. The "other" is now "embodied" elsewhere than in the individual unconscious' (Castoriadis, 1987: 109).

This statement implies that social imaginaries have a place in material objects, institutions, practices and behaviour. Thus social imaginaries are implied to have real effects, they are not solely imagined, but also have an actual place in society (Strauss, 2006).

Strauss and Quinn (1997) built upon Castoriadis' conceptualisation of the social imaginary arguing that meanings are not reducible to symbols or signifying structures. For Strauss and Quinn, social imaginaries

‘May be the conceptions of many members of a social group-or, sometimes, dominant members of a social group, or ideologists of a social group-repeated in multiple or influential social contexts, learned from participation in shared social practices and exposure to shared discourse or symbols’ (Strauss, 2006: 326).

What Strauss and Quinn (1997) recognised was that whilst a group of individuals can be exposed to symbols and languages and participate in activities, this engagement can create conflicting meanings. Thus the imaginary is not so much a unifying ‘cement’(Strauss, 2006: 326), but more so, we should consider the way in which individuals or collective groups within a society imagine and can imagine differently.

In his review of Castoriadis' *The imaginary institutions of society*, De Cock (2013) draws attention to another interesting and wholly relevant reading of Castoriadis' imaginary. De Cock (2013: 3) draws upon the notion of creativity arguing it is ‘intimately interwoven with the process of institutionalisation’. This notion of creation is linked to the what Castoriadis calls the ‘ensemblistic-identitary logic’ (Castoriadis, 1987); this logic is made up of two components which are essential to the functioning of society. The first of these components are *legein* or the component which represents language, the second is *teukhein*, or the idea of doing (i.e. fabricating or constructing) (Castoriadis, 1987; De Cock, 2013). These two components allow for the discussion of a particular distinction related to the imaginary. This distinction is between the *instituted imaginary*- ‘given structures, “materialized” institutions and works’ (Castoriadis, 1987: 108) and the *instituting imaginary*- ‘that which structures, institutes, materializes’ (Castoriadis, 1987: 108). Society is already instituted, but the notion of creation becomes important here, particularly when considering the

individual and their involvement in social processes wherein they can gain access to the instituted imaginary (De Cock, 2013). The idea of radical imagination mentioned earlier comes back into play here as this is what allows the individual to question the social significations of the instituted imaginary.

#### **3.5.3.1.4 Economic imaginaries:**

Having explored the concept of the imaginary from sociological, psychological and anthropological perspectives, I will now bring this discussion back to some of the ideas of the economic imaginary presented by Sum and Jessop. In presenting the notion of the economic imaginary, Jessop (2012b: 18) describes the concept as revolving around two main poles

‘A hegemonic ‘capitalocentric’ concern with profit-oriented, market-mediated accumulation based on the commodification of social relations (including relations with nature) and a counter-hegemonic anthropocentric concern with substantive material provisioning in all its forms.’

This serves to highlight that economic activities are unstructured and complex and that economic activities include a subset of economic relations that are either semiotically, organisationally or institutionally fixed (Jessop, 2013). Imaginaries are ‘discursively constituted and materially reproduced on many sites and scales, in different spatio-temporal contexts, and over various spatio-temporal horizons’ (Jessop, 2013: 236).

#### **3.5.3.1.4.1 Gramsci, hegemony and economic imaginaries:**

Key to Sum and Jessop's (2013) discussion of imaginaries and the way in which they come into being are the Gramscian concepts of historical bloc and hegemony. The notion of historical bloc is particularly useful when discussing neoliberalism and the shift from Keynesian economic policies to neoliberal economic policies. A historical bloc refers to the way in which social practices (structure) both create and are created by the values and theories (superstructure) used to rationalise and explain practices. The term historical bloc is employed by Gramsci to overcome the issues relating to the relationship between structure (or the base) and superstructure, more specifically to aid the problematic relationship between the economic base and its politico-ideological superstructure ( Sum and Jessop, 2013). Gramsci uses the term historical bloc as a

‘Symbol of unity among opposites, as the consolidation of a new historical synthesis, with ethico-moral elements that allow for the articulation between rulers and ruled, between structure and superstructure as a concrete totality, as well as between ideology and praxis on both an individual and a collective level with a minimum of contradictions’ (Torres, 2013: 99).

Gramsci (1980) argues that structures and superstructures form an historical bloc and that the superstructure is a complex and contradictory collective which reflects the ensemble of the social relations of production. When reviewing Gramscian literature and the work of those who employ Gramscian notions, there exists an abundance of scholarship concerning Gramsci's historical bloc and neoliberalism. Over the last three to four decades, neoliberalism denotes a radical paradigm shift in which neoliberalism has become the driving ideology within public policy and governance (Torres, 2013). Torres (2011, 2013) argues that neoliberalism has become the ‘new common sense’ penetrating public and private institutions.

Core to the neoliberal ideology pushed by neoliberal governments is the promotion of free markets, trade, deregulation and decreased state intervention. Neoliberalism denotes that the state should participate less in the provision of social services and that these services should be privatised to achieve competitive and efficient conditions that are supposedly unachievable in the non-responsive ineffective welfare state model (Torres, 2013). However, through history, we have seen that many of these promises of neoliberalism do not live up to expectations in reality, most notably we have seen the failure of the political economic neoliberal policies through the financial crash, and within my own case, through the cartel-like, non-competitive and unevenly priced energy market. A key point of contention with neoliberal ideology within my own research is the way in which the creation of a competitive market (deemed to be for the whole public good) actually was very much a failure in its early inception and how these failures have been sedimented and reproduced to still be felt in the domestic energy markets today.

The key question here for me is how does an ideology that has promised efficiency, competition and prosperity and not delivered become, and for such a prolonged period of time, remained 'common sense'? Torres (2013: 84) imparts that the 'reliance of neoliberalism on markets is equivalent to a religious or theological position'. The equation of neoliberalism to religion is an interesting one. Apple (2013) argues for neoliberalism as a religion because of the way in which as a vision, it encompasses every sector of society to its logics of competition, efficiency, marketisation and cost benefit analysis, and despite apparent failings, is 'immune' to empirical arguments. This conceptualisation of religion is not unlike the crisis-tendencies of capitalism which have been discussed throughout this chapter. Whilst the equation of neoliberalism to religion gives some useful insight into the way in

which we can view ideology as an almost higher power that can infiltrate all aspects of society, I would argue that the answer to how this occurs lies within the fact that the construction of an historical bloc cannot come into existence without a hegemonic social class.

The concept of hegemony refers to the ‘modalities of securing domination through social practices oriented to the winning of overt or tacit consent’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 201). The Gramscian definition of hegemony relates to the concept to the capabilities of dominant groups within society to exercise political, intellectual and moral leadership over subordinate groups within society, which is to achieve an ethos of consent to economic and political domination. Hegemony is essentially a system of class alliances wherein the hegemonic class exercises domination (by consent or coercion) over subaltern classes cemented by a common world view or in Gramscian terms, an ‘organic ideology’ (Ramos, 1982; Sum and Jessop, 2013). The dominant role of the hegemonic class is exercised on both an ethico-political and economic level and involves intellectual reform or transformation of a previous ideology, and a ‘redefinition’ of hegemonic structures and institutions into a new form (Ramos, 1982). The transformation and redefinition of an old hegemony involves the re-articulation of ideological elements into a new worldview which thus serves as the new ‘collective will’, unifying the hegemonic and subaltern classes; the hegemonic class being the dominant social class and the subaltern being those who are outside the hierarchy of power (Gramsci, 1971).

Hegemony relates to the idea of struggle. If we take the part of the definition of hegemony as ideological transformation, then it is feasible to argue for hegemony as an ideological struggle. Gramsci’s notion of ideology is described as a ‘terrain of practices, principles, and dogmas having a material and institutional nature

constituting individual subjects once these were inserted into such a terrain' (Ramos, 1982). By arguing that ideology constitutes individuals as subjects and social agents, this gives these social agents agency in their functions and roles within the overall structure of society. Gramsci's conception of ideology was not class distinct, it overcame class reductionism because ideological elements did not have a necessary class belonging and ideological systems were defined by their ideological discourses and elements, meaning ideological elements could be articulated via the different discourses of those classes competing for hegemony (Ramos, 1982). This means that in Gramsci's conception of ideology, there is potential for the crossover of classes on the ideological plane, or in other terms, civil society (Ramos, 1982; Sum and Jessop, 2013). The ideological struggle that is hegemony essentially relates to the hegemonic class adopting and articulating an hegemonic principle which enable this dominant class to diffuse, rearticulate and incorporate ideological elements into the discourses of other social classes, and thus strive to create a 'collective will' (Ramos, 1982).

The struggle over ideology is carried out within civil society, Gramsci discussed this struggle in terms of the 'war of position'. Effective hegemony depends upon the abilities of dominant groups or classes to merge identities, interests and values of key aspects of subordinate classes and groups into an hegemonic vision, and more practically and legislatively, to embed this into institutions and policies which allows for the translation of the new hegemonic vision into the new common sense (Sum and Jessop, 2013). Fundamental to hegemony, is the notion that ideology is a terrain of principles and policies in which social agents possess a crucial function; this refereeing to the Gramscian notion of intellectuals. For Gramsci, intellectuals are not just the 'organisers of culture' whom are typically your scholars and artists, but they are also individuals who exercise technical and authoritative



control within societies such as the politicians, bureaucrats, and managers (Ramos, 1982).

Imaginaries are strategically and structurally inscribed and presented for a hegemonic project, then it is inevitable that imaginaries will have ‘some significant, albeit necessarily partial, fit with real material interdependencies in the actually existing economy and/or in the relations among economic and extra-economic activities’ (Jessop, 2013: 236). This latter point beginning to hint at the tensions and contradictions expressed earlier within the chapter.

Once an imaginary has been operationalised by a hegemonic project and indeed become insitutionlised, the elements of the imaginary become a part of a specific instituted economy and thus has distinct emergent properties (Jessop, 2013). This has implicaitons with reagrds to structuration and (in)compossibility as the institutionalised elements of the imaginary will have an effect on the level of compatible and incompatible social relations within an economic order. The impossibilty of social relations is what often leads to the emergence of a competing imaginary, or can become as useful semiotic and material resource when a period of instability or crisis arises (Jessop, 2013). In the light of this point, research employing the concept of the imaginary (or indeed research which encompasses a critique of political economy) must not only analyse how a dominant imaginary shapes and insitutionalises economic relations. A full critiuqe of political economy must also acknowledge and analyse the ‘structural contradiction and strategic dilemmas’ which are inherent in the economic relations (as well as the extra-economic) as a result of the dominant imaginary (Jessop, 2013: 236). Here there temproal awareness and there is a spatio-temporal discussion to be had in that the contradictions and strategic dilemmas

related to a dominant imaginary and its resulting effects on economic and extra-economic relations can only be postponed in the short-to medium-term (Jessop, 2013). Given the instability of capitalism discussed earlier, these points of tension are likely to destabilise imaginaries and prompt the search for a new imaginary (Sum and Jessop, 2013). It is here that I will move on to outlining the generative mechanisms of an imaginary and the way in which they contribute to the various periods of relative stability and/or crisis.

### **3.5.3.2 The generative mechanisms of an imaginary:**

#### **3.5.3.2.1 Variation, selection and retention of imaginaries:**

Imaginaries generally relate to the idea of forming and mobilising a hegemonic project wherein the economic success of this project is based upon a cohesion wider interests (Sum and Jessop, 2013). Jessop and Oosterlynck (2008: 1157-8) argue that an ‘economic imaginary is a semiotic order...and, as such, constitutes the semiotic moment of a network of social practices in a given social field, institutional order, or wider social formation.’ Given that this outlining of an economic imaginary consists of several ‘moving parts’ across field and levels of analysis, the case of which imaginary becomes dominant and selected and retained by specific actors, discursively institutionalised and materially constituted is dependent on power relations and sequences of interests within a particular society (Belfrage and Hauf, 2017)

Imaginaries are products of semiotic and material practice and as a result, they hold a central role in the production, reproduction and transformation of structures. Imaginaries are discussed and materially reproduced on several sites and scales. Sum and Jessop (2013) argue that because imaginaries exist at different sites and scales of action, it is often the case that social forces seek to establish an imaginary as the hegemonic frame for action, along with a number of competing sub-

hegemonic imaginaries that further frame and influence social action. Jessop, (2012b: 17) highlights that

‘Hegemonic and dominant imaginaries are generally socially instituted and socially embedded and get reproduced through various mechanisms that help to maintain their cognitive and normative hold on the social agents involved in the field(s) that they map.’

During periods of crisis (such as the crises of capitalist markets), economic imaginaries more than one imaginary, other than the dominant imaginary can come into play and compete. The multiplicity of competing imaginaries can thus contribute to moments of *variation*. Sum and Jessop (2013) further elaborate on these moments of variation in outlining the generative (and institutionalising) mechanisms of variation, selection and retention (VSR) in relation to hegemonisation of (competing) imaginaries (*see figure 3*).

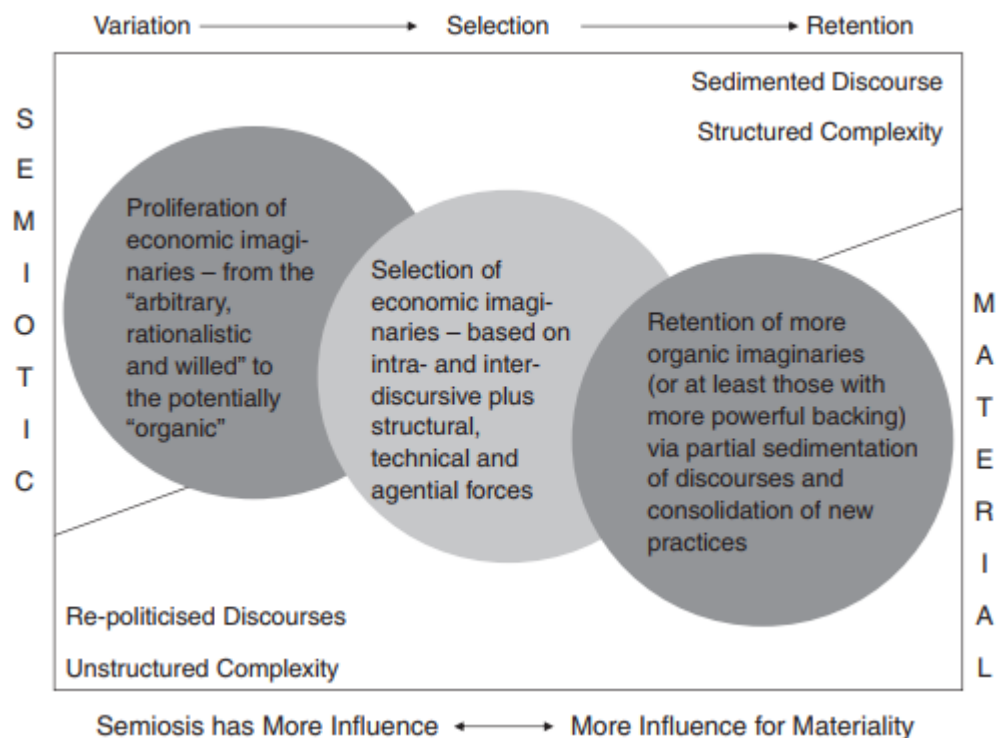


Figure 2 Variation, selection and retention (Jessop, 2015)

VSR refers to the mechanisms by which new practices and routines are established, institutionalised and stabilised. These three mechanisms shape ‘the movement from *construal* of the world to the *construction* of social facts as external and constraining, and hence from politicised meaning and unstructured complexity to sedimented meaning and structured complexity’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 184). *Figure 3* depicts this movement from construal to construction and illustrates the strength of an imaginary related to the strength of semiotic or material factors. If CPE essentially is interested in the study of the ‘co-evolution of semiotic and extra-semiotic factors and processes in the contingent emergence, subsequent privileging, and ongoing realisation of specific discursive and material practice’ (Jessop, 2013: 237), then the idea of discussing crisis here is useful. Crises are often sources of disruption in the way in which actors typically view the world and serve to disrupt overarching narratives, frameworks of operation, policy and ideologies (Sum and Jessop, 2013). It is this proliferation that gives rise to the first mechanism of *variation*.

Variation as a mechanism relates to discourses and practices which can be subjected to a moment of variation due to challenges, crisis, change or simple adaptation. The initial phases of crises are typically characterised by this and open up the space for the ‘(re-) politicization of sedimented discourses and practices’ (Jessop, 2013: 238). What emerges from this moment of variation is a plethora of interpretations on how to re-stabilise amidst said crisis and equally, interpretations with lack of meaningful connections made to the most important factors within this crisis. What makes an interpretation or strategy most attractive

and feasible is their level of resonance and capabilities to reinterpret said crisis and mobilise support within a field (Jessop, 2013).

What is central within a CPE approach is the understanding why one of the many interpretations that exists during the initial crisis phase gets *selected* as a viable policy or strategy which is intended to manage the crisis or move beyond it through the idea of imagined recoveries (Jessop, 2013). Selection refers to the choosing or privileging of certain discourses for the interpretation of events, the legitimisation of action and the representation of social phenomena (Jessop, 2004). The selection phase of crisis is dependent upon discursive selectivities, but also depends on extra-semiotic factors related to structural, agential and technological selectivities (these selectivities will be outlined further in the following section) (Jessop, 2013). In breaking this down, what this means for the process of selecting an imaginary is that it is not solely based on narrative and argumentation, but it is also highly dependent on the organisation and coordination of the media, on defining the roles of intellectuals within the imagined recovery, on structure and various other aspects of the public and private realm which directly relate to economics, politics and ideology (Sum, 2013; Sum and Jessop, 2013). The narratives and which are eventually selected for the imagined recovery are typically not relevant to all, but they serve to mobilise specific arguments and combinations of arguments, but equally suppress other narratives, arguments and discourses (Jessop, 2013). There also needs to be some consideration of who needs to be convinced in order for an imaginary to be selected, here it could be down to key policy makers, but at times, the selection of an imaginary may also have to satisfy and gain support from a wider range of social forces (Sum and Jessop, 2013).

The three-phase process outlined by Sum and Jessop (2013) then progresses to the *retention* of some key discourses, this is where I will begin to see the sedimentation and structuration of a particular imaginary (Jessop, 2013). The retention phase is a phase which despite the connotations of durability, is actually quite precarious. Jessop (2013: 239) argues that there is

‘Many a slip between the discursive resonance of old, reworked, or new imaginaries in a given conjuncture and their translation into adequate policies, effective crisis-management routines, durable new social arrangement, and institutionalized compromises to support accumulation.’

Whilst discourses can be (re)politicised during times of crisis and complexity, it becomes more difficult to sediment these discourses within a structured complexity (i.e. it becomes difficult to sediment these discourses as the new ‘taken-for-granted discourses of everyday life). A key issue here becomes whether the retained imaginary is actually a good fit for the ‘real, or potentially realizable, sets of material interdependencies in the economy and its embedding in wider sets of social relations’ (Jessop, 2013: 239). This issue draws our attention to the spatio-temporal horizons of an imaginary and the fact that there is greater potential for the institutionalisation of an imaginary if effects a greater number of sites and scales (Sum and Jessop, 2013). It is this factor that will lead to the structured coherence of an imaginary across institutional orders, thought, discourse and social relations (Jessop and Sum, 2001; Jessop, 2004). If this is not possible under the new imaginary, then the cycle of VSR will begin again.

*Figure 3* also illustrates how these moments of variation, selection and retention are not clear-cut and unidirectional. The overlap of each stage indicates that

in moments of selection and retention, wherein imaginaries are multiple, challenged and their institutionalisation is called into question; each phase can be extended for relative periods of time until some form of consensus or impasse is reached in a moment of crisis. Semiotic and material forces are always at play across each phase of the cycle, although their relevance and weighting can vary and change across the three phases. Furthermore, even though imagined recovery is selected, discursively and structurally sedimented, it is not to say that complexity is reduced completely as this new imaginary is likely to give rise to complexities and challenges amongst social relations (Jessop, 2013). These concluding points relating back to my earlier discussions of the crises of capitalism in critical political economy.

#### **3.5.3.2.2 VSR and selectivities:**

The variation, selection, retention and institutionalisation of imaginaries is shaped by at least four forms of strategic selectivities. Sum and Jessop (2013) categorises these selectivities as structural, agential, discursive and technological. In relating this to SRA, each of these selectivities involves different processes of variation, selection and retention between semiotic and extra-semiotic factors (Sum and Jessop, 2013). The interaction of selectivities ‘helps to provide explanations that are adequate at the level of meaning (semiosis) and material causality (through discursive, strategic, agential, and technological selectivities)’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 27). These selectivities become crucial to the understanding and analysis of phenomena (and specifically features three-five of CPE outlined in *figure 1* earlier within the chapter) as their interaction serves to highlight the ideational and material solutions offered in perceived periods of crisis or disruptions to social order (Sum

and Jessop, 2013). When linked to crisis, the discussion of selectivities allows for the analysis of real causes and their real effects in specific spatio-temporal horizons, relations and events. The inclusion of the discussion of selectivities also allows for the analysis of the way in which actors engage in reproduction or reflect upon the causes and mechanisms which have produced crisis, much like the conceptualisations offered through SRA (Sum and Jessop, 2013).

Structural selectivities imply that there is an uneven composition of constraints and opportunities on social forces in their pursuit of particular projects (Sum and Jessop, 2013). The configuration of constraints and opportunities has come into being through the reproduction of social practices, but can be transformed over time, either deliberately through transformation inducing efforts, or through the culmination of smaller efforts over time (Sum and Jessop, 2013). The structural selectivity is relevant in the discussion of Gramsci's 'war of position' where the struggle against an existing hegemonic system occurs on various levels of society (economic, political and cultural). Whether these wars of position or attempts of transformation succeed or not, they are likely to have path-dependent legacies (Sum and Jessop, 2013). Structural selectivities have several effects within the VSR process. On the one hand, a structural selectivity can be relatively path-dependent or path-shaping (Sum and Jessop, 2013; Belfrage and Hauf, 2017). On the other hand, they promote asymmetries when certain interests, actors, strategies and tactics are privileged (Sum and Jessop, 2013).

Discursive selectivities and semiosis are rooted in the sense- and meaning-making of all scales of everyday life in the face of complexity or crisis (Sum and Jessop, 2013). Like structural selectivities, they can appear asymmetrical in the sense that the constraints and opportunities inscribed in genres, styles and discourses in



terms of what can be articulated and who can articulate it, furthermore there exist asymmetries in the way in which articulations enter intertextual, interdiscursive and contextual fields (Sum and Jessop, 2013). Semiotic resources set limits to what can be imagined so discursive selectivity refers to the way in which different discourses enable some articulations to be made over others within the limits of languages and the forms of discourse that exist within them (Sum and Jessop, 2013). Discursive selectivity harbours a spatio-temporal element of discourse. Languages possess the capability to express temporality and spatiality differently, 'privileging some spatio-temporal horizons over others and allowing for greater or less anticipation of as-yet-unrealized possibilities' (Sum and Jessop, 2013:215). Within the discursive selectivity, there is also scope for hegemony and the production of counter-hegemonies (Sum and Jessop, 2013).

Technological selectivities are considered to be 'assemblages of knowledge, disciplinary and governmental specific rationalities, specific affordances, sites and mechanisms of calculated intervention, and social relations for transforming nature and/or governing social relations' (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 218). Technological selectivities are addressed in terms of technologies of governmentality. Thus, technological selectivities are perceived in such a way that they allow for the discussion of how such technologies shape individual choices and their capacity to act. These technologies almost form code of conduct ( Sum and Jessop, 2013; Hauf, 2016).

Agential selectivity are grounded in the idea that social agents (individual or collectives) have the capacity to have an effect or make a difference in specific moments of crisis or events as a result of their 'idiosyncratic abilities' to exploit the

aforementioned selectivities. For an agent to make a difference depends upon their abilities to

‘(1) read conjunctures and identify potentials for action; (2) repoliticize sedimented discourses and rearticulate them; (3) recombine extant technologies or invent new ones; and (4) shift the balance of forces in space-time’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 219).

Agents can be effective due to their capacities to persuade, displace and rearticulate discourses and imaginaries.

### **3.6 Chapter summary and conclusions:**

The main purpose of this chapter was to introduce cultural political economy as a viable institutional framework for analysis of change. The motivation for delving into CPE arose out of some of the challenges for neo-institutional theory which I identified in chapter 2. These limitations pertained to the ontological conflicts that exist between institutional logics and institutional work and the implications this has upon the consideration of structure-agency within empirical analysis. Another identified limitation relates specifically to institutional logics and the unidirectional discussion of change as linear which results in the reduced capabilities in actually empirically capturing the complex nature of change. Finally, I identified some issues relating to the temporal capabilities of neo-institutional research which relate to the discussion of path dependency.

I turned to the work of Sum and Jessop because of wide ranging bodies of literature which has contributed to Sum and Jessop's (2013) conceptualisation of CPE. This broad range of influences include the regulation approach, state theory Foucault, Schumpeter and in particular, Gramsci. The plethora of ideas which come from the various points of focus have allowed me to not only distinguish Sum and Jessop's CPE from other cultural (political) economic studies, but it has also allowed me to explore critical political economy further.

The purpose of outlining critical political economy has been to further unpack some of the influences upon Sum and Jessop's (2013) presentation of CPE. This has not only allowed me to further distinguish their version of CPE from of cultural economic studies, but it has also allowed for the exploration of the regulation approach, the regulation of capitalism and the strategic-relational perception of structure-agency. In focusing upon the regulation approach, I have been able to discuss the ways in which modes of regulation become institutionalised, but I have also been able to better understand demonstrate the volatility, instability but also at times, relative stability of capitalism and markets.

By outlining the basic SRA model offered by Sum and Jessop (2013), I have gone some way in going beyond a dichotomous discussion of structure-agency. However, the outlining of SRA still remains abstract in places and Sum and Jessop (2013) at times do not move beyond the conceptualisation of an idea (and how this conceptualisation may be implemented in analysis). This is particularly true for the consideration of power. Whilst critical political economy (and its related concepts) do allow for the examination of class struggles, tensions, contradictions, tactics and strategies, the politicised nature of power can sometimes be lost. This criticism is particularly illustrated through the critique of SRA offered by Heras (2018) who calls

for the acknowledgment of the ‘politics of power’ in historical change and argues that Jessop’s consideration of power is often reduced to *explanandum* rather than *explanans* (Heras, 2018).

Despite some of these criticisms of SRA, Sum and Jessop’s (2013) relational presentation of structure-agency demonstrates the reciprocal and reflexive nature of the structure-agency relationship I endeavour to capture in my empirical analysis and discussion. *Figure 2* also illustrates some of the issues others such as Battilana, (2006), Suddaby (2010) and Zilber (2013) perceive in the structure-agency conversation within (and between) institutional logics and institutional work. The particular critique of Sum and Jessop’s discussion (or lack thereof) of power relations in SRA offered by Heras (2018) is something which will be of particular focus in the rest of this chapter through the outlining of the concept of the imaginary, as well as through a Gramscian inspired outlining of hegemony and intellectuals. Indeed, Heras (2018) draws upon Gramsci and historical materialism to develop his own discussion of power in line with Jessop’s original conceptions of SRA and Sum and Jessop’s later presentation of SRA within CPE.

The CPE literature has also allowed for the engagement with the concept of power. Power for me is not solely about domination; it relates to the discussion of tensions, struggles, structural and institutional ensembles, strategies and tactics. In bringing this in line with my research context and the particular focus upon ideology, neoliberalism and the creation of a competitive market where one previously did not exist, the discussion of power (as an umbrella term) relates to the politicised nature of structure-agency. I will next turn to outlining my research methodology and analytical protocol to demonstrate how I will encompass key ideas from both chapters 2 and 3 within my empirical discussion and analysis; below I have provided

a table with the key terms and their respective definitions. These key CPE terms feature in my methodological outline and in my second empirical chapter (chapter 6).

These approaches and their emphases (particularly knowledge, evolution and power) are all significant for my discussion of the transformation of the production and supply of energy in Britain into a market, some of these key themes will become particularly important where I outline the notion of an economic imaginary and its evolutionary mechanism. The ideas of power, discourse and economic subjects will also become particularly important when I outline the Gramscian concepts of hegemony and the role intellectuals play in producing (or challenging) hegemony.

## Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter sets out to bridge the neo-institutional literature covered in chapter 2 and the cultural political economy (CPE) literature reviewed in chapter 3 in order to develop a frame for empirical analysis. A critical realist approach is adopted which will allow me to explore the transformational change that occurred in the creation of a competitive British energy market in the 1980s. The aim of this chapter is therefore to elaborate on the methods, which serve to guide my data collection and analysis. I have argued in the previous chapter for CPE as an institutional approach, with its ontology rooted in a strategic-relational perspective, is one that can perpetuate the neo-institutional frameworks of institutional logics and institutional work (Sum and Jessop, 2013). The paradigmatic contentions between the logics and work frameworks (discussed in chapter 2), risk rendering the analysis of change as too linear, diminishing the complexity of relations and the consideration of politics and power. Thus the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the methods by which I will build a framework that overcomes the fairly one sided (either a focus upon structure or agency) neo-institutional analyses of change.

This chapter will first briefly position my work within critical realism and offer some brief considerations of the approach and its compatibility with neo-institutionalism. I will then go on to outline the research setting and period, and in turn outline my method choices and why they are important for exploring my overarching research question to *explain and understand the changes that occurred in the British energy Market during (and to some extent, after) privatisation (1979-2007)*. Following this, I will provide some discussion of the primary and secondary sources used within my thesis and account for my data collection process (including

any challenges I had to overcome in this process). The final sections of this chapter will discuss data analysis both from a neo-institutionalist perspective and then from an extended institutional approach. The former will outline the analytical protocol for the empirical discussion of (RQ1) *what were the changing institutional logics and how were these changes enacted by key players within the market?* And the latter will focus upon (RQ2) *what imaginary is present during the privatisation of the British energy sector?* There will also be consideration of both research questions alongside their sub-questions. Both the neo-institutional and CPE analysis sections will be presented separately to reflect the presentation of the following empirical chapters (also the organisation of my literature reviews), and to demonstrate how I employ a neo-institutionalist framework as a foundation for my analysis. From this, I provide an illustrative CPE discussion and analysis to overcome some of the aforementioned limitations of institutional logics and institutional work. Throughout the analysis process, I was very much aware that whilst I am presenting both institutional and CPE findings over two separate chapters, they still had to be in dialogue with one another as the goal of this thesis is to extend the institutional framework through CPE.

#### **4.1 A critical realist ontology:**

This chapter will outline a critical realist (CR) ontology. Whilst CR is not a key approach in neo-institutionalism, there are some examples within this large body of literature. The following sections will elaborate on some examples of CR within neo-institutional research to illustrate the way in which I can negotiate making use of the approach in both my empirical chapters. I will first begin with an outline of CR, learning extensively from my review in chapter 3 and from cultural political economy.

In chapter 3 I outlined CPE; central to Sum and Jessop's (2013) development of CPE are the critical realist and strategic-relational approaches. The critical realist paradigm emphasises three particular issues which are all relevant to my context of study and the complex transformation the landscape of the British energy field in 1980. The three issues pertain to

'The existence of real but often latent causal mechanisms that may be contingently actualised in specific conjunctures; the stratification of the real world into different layers and regions that require different concepts, assumptions and explanatory principles corresponding to their different emergent properties; and the identification of the naturally necessary properties and causal mechanisms in different fields as well as the conditions in which they are actualised' (Jessop and Sum, 2006: 299).

CR distinguishes real mechanisms, actual events and empirical observations.

'The real' relates to 'naturally necessary' features; these can be causal properties or the possibilities of action offered by a material object or social network (Sum and Jessop, 2013). The real can also comprise of the vulnerability of social relations, which in some cases may be observable. This latter point relates to the way in which real's causal and generative mechanisms can be manifest in a particular way within a particular context. These manifestations are grasped by actors who can then go on to give them multiple meanings depending on their level of social understanding (Bhaskar, 1978). This then places emphasis upon the consideration of time and space and the importance of understanding the wider context and circumstance of particular events and the generative mechanisms at play (Archer, 1995, 1998). The empirical level of discussion is related to actual events that is those events which are actualised. Both the



empirical and the actual open up a line of questions about the real (Jessop and Sum, 2006; Sum and Jessop, 2013).

CR differs from a positivist ontology of cause-effect. Causality from a CR perspective sees events or changes as occurring as a result of the interaction of mechanisms which have their own particular properties and causal powers (Mingers and Standing, 2017). CR employs a method of retrodution which is ‘an open process that switches among concept building, retroductive moments, empirical inquiries, conceptual refinement, further retrodution, and so on’ in an effort to grasp the real (Sum and Jessop, 2013:10). I pursue this process of retrodution in my endeavour to build theory about the studied phenomena and thus extend the conceptual framework of institutional logics and work through CPE. This commitment to theory-building accords with how adherents of CR understand the world. Indeed, for critical realists, the real world is itself theory-laden with the starting point for any enquiry discursively constituted. This implies a movement from the initial outlining of a problem, which necessarily is simplistic to an account which does justice to the complexity of the world. The resulting account synthesises multiple determinants and real mechanisms and makes connections between the actual and the empirical (Jessop and Sum, 2006; Sum and Jessop, 2013).

#### **4.1.1 Critical realism and neo-institutionalist theory:**

There are neo-institutionalist studies which recognise the advantages and implications of applying a critical realist ontology to institutional analysis (Leca and Naccache, 2006; Mutch, Delbridge and Ventresca, 2006; Wry, 2009; Delbridge and

Edwards, 2013). Two areas of note are CRs consideration of the dualism of structure-agency and the way in which this can further our understanding of the paradox of embedded agency discussed above in chapter 2 (Battilana, 2006). This alongside CRs focus upon a stratified ontology in relation to multiple levels of institutional analysis, can help to delineate the relationship between institutional structures across multiple levels and embedded agents (Mutch, Delbridge and Ventresca, 2006). These CR insights are important to my research (particularly as demonstrated in my second empirical chapter) as I endeavour to develop an extended institutional framework with the help of CPE Not only to empirically demonstrate the reality of institutional concepts in application, but also to further conceptualise the relationship between structure-agency and wider context and the way in which this contributes to institutional change.

#### **4.1.1.1 Dualism of structure-agency**

When considering the duality of structure-agency, Friedland and Alford's (1991) original conceptualisation of society as an inter-institutional system offers the insight that any analysis must work at the level of the individual, the organisation and wider society. In understanding the micro-processes of agency as nested within a higher order level of analysis, this perspective fits relatively well with CRs distinction of structure and agency and the push to understand their relational dynamics. As discussed within chapter 2, institutional research has the tendency to privilege either structure or agency, with institutional logics prioritising structure essentially giving a top-down mode of analysis and interpretations (Leca and Naccache, 2006; Delbridge and Edwards, 2013). Similarly, in the institutional work literature where agency is prioritised, we run the risk of failing to determine what

actually constitutes institutional work (Zilber, 2013). By applying the dualistic perspective of structure-agency, rather than focusing on one or the other, I feel better positioned to analyse the embeddedness of agents and the institutional work they do, as well as capturing their dialectical relationship through consideration of structure, in this case institutional logics (Barley and Tolbert, 1997; Mutch, Delbridge and Ventresca, 2006).

Leca and Naccache (2006) argue that some works within institutional entrepreneurship have proposed more sequential models of change wherein an actor possesses the ability to completely disembed themselves from existing institutional arrangements at a time of crisis or shock to either create new institutions, or change existing ones (Beckert, 1999; Levy and Scully, 2007). This more sequential perspective harks back to the rational choice theory notion of ‘abstract voluntarism’ (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 963) which mistakenly perceives agency to exist largely outside of institutional arrangements. Leca and Naccache (2006: 628) suggest ‘a model of institutional entrepreneurship must provide a model of change in which actors can create and change institutions without disembedding from the social world.’ CR is relevant here as it posits that actors are not passive and can shape social structures (Bhaskar, 1978), but that the causal power of actors relates to pre-existing structures to create or change institutions (Leca and Naccache, 2006). Similarly, Wry (2009) studies the way in which actors are aware of and react to practices which reinforce institutional logics; where multiple logics can exist, these actors can draw upon them to challenge or create new institutions and further justify their practices.

#### 4.1.1.2 A stratified ontology

CR distinguishes between the real, the actual and the empirical and the empirical domain encompasses experienced events. The empirical domain is the level to which actors have direct access: it is the level of actors' sensations, impression, and perceptions of reality (Leca and Naccache, 2006: 630). The domain of the actual comprises of events (detected or not) in which things can occur regardless of whether actors perceive or experience them. These events are not transferred into the domain of the empirical until actors have transformed them into experience (Bhaskar, 1978). Finally the domain of the real encompasses the generative mechanisms and causal powers which cause events (Leca and Naccache, 2006).

Relating these levels of analysis more closely to institutional theory, the empirical domain is where institutional analysis 'considers actors' actions and the actors' empirical experience and perception' (Leca and Naccache, 2006: 631-632). At this level of analysis, I am able to capture the more subjective view of actors, typically through discourse analysis (Phillips, Lawrence and Hardy, 2004). A limitation is that actors are not always aware of institutions given their 'taken for granted' nature and whilst actors may enforce institutions, they may not directly perceive them. As such I cannot fully access institutions and provide adequate institutional analysis as derived from the discourses of actors (Leca and Naccache, 2006). To overcome this, I must consider institutions in the domain of the actual. Institutions 'gradually acquire the moral and ontological status of taken-for-granted facts which, in turn, shape future interactions and negotiations' (Barley and Tolbert, 1997: 94). My role here is to analyse and characterise this behaviour and to then

relate them to institutions and institutional structures. Herein lies a moment for the consideration of SRA and structure-agency. Actors are not simply passive in receiving higher-order institutional logics; indeed, ‘while logics have the power to impede or facilitate the action of different actors, the activation of such powers is contingent upon those agents who conceive of and pursue what might be possible’ (Delbridge and Edwards, 2013: 931).

Institutions have a role to play in influencing organisational actions and behaviour, they are not autonomous. Institutions are embedded in higher-order institutional logics (Thornton, 2002: 82). Institutional logics ‘correspond to structures located in the domain of the real’ (Leca and Naccache, 2006: 632) and are the principles of organisation and legitimacy (Friedland and Alford, 1991). In this sense, institutional logics represent the principles of the games, whereas institutions are the rules of the game (Leca and Naccache, 2006) and as such institutional logics cannot be reduced to institutions. Lounsbury, Ventresca and Hirsch (2003: 72) consider the ontological status of institutional logics as ‘analytically removed from the more active struggles over meaning and resources.’ In this sense, institutional logics are external to actors. The manifestation of institutional logics as institutions in the domain of the actual is dependent upon contextual factors and the way in which actors act and transfer institutional logics through scripts, rules and the like (Leca and Naccache, 2006). When considering the generative mechanisms of variation selection and retention; these mechanisms are technically ‘un-observable’ in the present. If I were to analyse change in the British energy industry in the present day, I would not be able to observe these generative mechanisms until they outcomes of these mechanisms were retained and manifested in the domain of the empirical. As a result of the historical perspective of this thesis and the historical nature of the data I

collected and employed, these mechanisms are more observable and discernible at the levels of the real, the actual and the empirical. As the critical realist Bhaskar (1998) notes in a manner which creates a link to institutional logics, society is a complex phenomenon which is not reducible to just people, equally it is not simply reducible to structure.

#### **4.2 Research setting- identifying the field**

I chose to study the privatisation of the British domestic energy production and provision in the 1979-2007 because of initial personal observations of the state of the energy market (from a discontented consumer's perspective), but also for several theoretical and empirical reasons. From a theoretical perspective, studying energy privatisation is useful as it allows for the examination of the processes of privatisation and the emergence of a market (with neoliberal logics e.g. consumer choice and competition) where one had not previously existed. The study can thus explore the theoretical discussion of change, struggle, (de)legitimation, power and political connections. Empirically, this period and context are fairly well documented and in particular, there is plentiful data relating to specific organisations (e.g. British Gas)<sup>6</sup>, regulatory bodies (e.g. OFGEM) and political actors (e.g. Margaret Thatcher). Empirically, this research setting is also of economic relevance as many of the issues that exist within the British domestic energy market at present have stemmed from

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<sup>6</sup> There is less extensive data available relating to the other focal organisation of this thesis (CEGB), but this silence becomes an important part of my analysis and empirical discussion later within the thesis.

events which occurred in the 1980s wherein the landscape of British Domestic energy was *seemingly* completely overhauled. The 1980s-2007 essentially witnessed a shift in paradigms which resulted in not only a changing economic and political ideology in the form of neoliberalism, but also altered the way in which organisations and individuals exist, operate and interact with one another. A certain ethos relating to financialisation, deregulation, consumerism and neoliberalism was introduced in the British economy generally, and manifested in a strong manner (in a discursive, regulatory and operational sense) within British energy.

Given the magnitude and complexity of the transformation that occurred during this period, defining the field of study is also important in positioning and guiding both my data collection and analysis. Defining the field of analysis is also crucial given the extensive discussion of institutional fields within chapter 2 (e.g. Zietsma *et al.*, 2017) and the consideration of wider environment and organisational ecology in chapter 3 (e.g. Sum and Jessop, 2013). For the purpose of this research project, the field will broadly be defined as the *exchange* field wherein membership and actions pertaining to this field involve producers, suppliers, consumers and regulators (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Zietsma *et al.*, 2017). In analysing the British energy market as an exchange field, I am able to account for moments of homogeneity in the sense that at some point during change, there are specific expectations and vulnerabilities all members of the field are subject to. Given that the encouragement of a competitively driven domestic and commercial energy market were key in the Conservative agenda (and subsequent New Labour agendas), the notion of competition (or lack of it) is also a crucial talking point in my research as it is imperative to neoliberal ideology and marketisation, but is also a point of tensions, struggle and conflict which often leads to moments of crisis.

### **4.3 Research design-historical study:**

To allow me to explore both institutional logics and institutional work, change across multiple levels and the relationality of structure-agency with an appreciation of context and historical contingency, I adopt and develop a method in this thesis capable of, as a critical realist, both explaining and understanding these phenomena. The period under study in some ways predetermined my choice to employ historical research methods, but these research methods also account for the fact that I am in essence a ‘situated historical researcher’ (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). Being a situated historical research allows me to recognise and assign significance to specific actions and events whose consequences I am already aware of historical research methods accounting for the retrospective nature of historical research (Bucheli and Wadhvani, 2014). In recognising my situated position, I am better able to demonstrate my relationship to the period under study and more transparently illustrate my production of historical knowledge and narrative of the past (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). Equally important however is the idea that historical research can also provide me with an alternative perspective of events. In such moments, I am able to identify consequences of significance which I may not have previously considered as integral to the analysis of the changes which occurred in the privatisation of the gas and electricity industries.

Historical research differs from ‘conventional’ qualitative techniques employed in the study of organisations as it ‘does not involve a procedural, step-by-step approach to interpretation and analysis aimed at deriving objective concepts and categories’ (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018: 114). Rather historical research is more conscious of the position of the ‘situated historical researcher’ and the methodological issues (and subsequent solutions) historical data can incur. There is



the consideration for the way in which this contributes to the analysis and interpretation of events and actions in the past as well as taking into account that the interpretations that I will offer are also to some extent shaped by extant explanations (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018).

Historical research for me, as a situated historical researcher, allows me to make specific knowledge claims that differ to research methods employed in the present. The retrospective nature of my research allows for the analysis and discussion of processes that take a longer period of time to unfold, as is the same for development of social structures and institutions (Braudel, 1958). A historical inquiry also allows for the consideration of the development of industries, organisations and markets over time and more specifically, particular events, contingencies and conjunctures which contribute to this development (Sewell, 2005). Finally, and also crucial to the contribution of this thesis, historical research allows me to excavate meaning and power relations which are established and resigned to the past and would be more difficult to capture in the present (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018).

My position as the researcher involves me physically searching for and gathering data. This is very much guided by my theoretical interests, as well as my prior knowledge of the subject matter and my personal motivations into carrying out the research. As such, my role is to become reflexive and critical as to how my perspective in the present has a hand in shaping the research process and the knowledge garnered affects claims which are made. To be critical and reflexive involves methodological clarity and transparency concerning the way in which I identify key data as well as how I interpret and explain this data and my subsequent understanding and evaluations (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). Given that my

motivations for carrying out this research emerged through an empirical problem that I experienced and observed in the present, coupled with the fact that I am examining more modern history which directly contributes to present issues within the British energy market, there is inevitably going to be some dialogue between the past and the present which also calls for reflexivity on my behalf (Ricoeur, 2004; Wadhvani and Decker, 2018).

The discussion above has a direct impact upon the research conducted in this thesis. Leblebici (2014) and Wadhvani and Decker (2018) draw upon Runciman's (1983) description of methodology as encompassing four parts to a research process, the first pertaining to *reportage* or, more specifically, the way in which historical research accounts for 'facts' from data. This step essentially relates to the reconstruction of a historical period and source criticism and the triangulation of multiple sources. The second and third processes refer to *explanations* and accounts of cause and effect and the subsequent *understanding* of these cause and effects in relation to actors and their experiences (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). The final step in the process involves some form of *judgement* of the event, action or behaviour under evaluation (Leblebici, 2014). The following sections will briefly explore each of these aspects in more detail.

#### **4.3.1 Source criticism:**

Within historical research, there is a specific concern with source analysis. This arises as a result of the retrospective nature of historical research and the idea that the data consulted is curated and stored by others and is thus potentially subject to distortion and de-contextualisation over time (Kipping, Wadhvani and Bucheli, 2014; Lipartito, 2014; Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). This is often a point of contention amongst organisational theorists who question the 'truth' or 'reliability'

of historical narratives and highlights a methodological issue in historical research (Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014; Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). Thus it is crucial to recognise that whilst archival data are primary sources of data in historical research, they do only represent traces of the past (Lipartito, 2014; Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014). This is where transparency in the reasoning behind the collection of specific data (e.g. search strategies and document type) and triangulation of multiple forms of data become crucial and, more pertinently, the idea of source criticism becomes essential.

Kipping, Wadhvani and Bucheli (2014) and Wadhvani and Decker (2018) offer some discussion of source criticism through the consideration of *validity*, *credibility* and *transparency* of historical sources. Similarly, Gill, Gill and Roulet (2018) offer a similar discussion but link source criticism and the *credibility*, *confirmability* and *dependability* of sources to the trustworthiness criteria of qualitative research (as offered by Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In assessing source credibility, I will be assessing the ‘primacy’ of my data in addressing the research question (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018: 117). The idea of primacy relates to the proximity of the data consulted to the phenomena under study. There needs to be consideration of closeness in time and space with regard to the event under scrutiny (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). For this reason, archival data (i.e. collected from the archive) acts as my primary data. The archival materials collected are sources which present accounts of the phenomena under scrutiny, recorded and documented at the time of the event (I outline this further in section 4.4). Gill, Gill and Roulet (2018) argue that source criticism allows for an element of suspicion surrounding the nature and preservation of archival records and allows for a more comprehensive inquiry concerning not only explicit meanings and evidence, but also implicit assumptions

and the moments of silence often found within archival preservation and historical research (again, I will explore this in more detail in section 4.4) (Gill, Gill and Roulet, 2018). Viewing history in this way highlights the more hermeneutic and interpretive elements of the process of constructing historical narratives.

Transparency in historical research relates to the way in which specific actors, actions, events and language must be traceable back to their specific documentary sources so that they become verifiable by other researchers (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). This is in direct contrast to the anonymisation typically found in qualitative research of the present, and is pertinent given the specificity of the phenomena under study and the extended time periods covered. Gill, Gill and Roulet (2018) would describe this as confirmability, a status which requires a level of reflexivity wherein the relationship between a researcher and the (hi)story being explored is established (Hatch, 1996). Confirmability requires revealing the underlying assumptions of the research project. To relate this back to a more organisational theory criterion of trustworthiness, Guba (1981) would have discussed this in terms of the researcher revealing the underlying assumptions of the research project which aided the formulation of research questions and the presentation of data.

I have mentioned my reliance on multiple sources and triangulation to establish 'facts' in relation to my research question and empirical analysis (triangulation here referring to making reference to and use of multiple sources of data), but triangulation here is not employed in a way that is typical to management and organisation studies (Kipping, Wadhvani and Bucheli, 2014). Whilst management and organisation analysis refers to triangulation as the use of multiple sources to create an objective account of what actually happened, this only forms

part of the historical research process (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). Historical research also views triangulation as necessary as no one single source or document can provide all the information needed to adequately explain, understand and judge the actors, events and actions involved in the empirical problem. What is more, triangulation can also allow for the establishment of secondary sources which either provide convergent or divergent accounts of the empirical problem (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). This is particularly useful for my research and in the answering of my research questions as triangulation in this sense allows me to analyse tension, conflicting ideas and the wider perceptions of the processes of privatisation. This becomes crucial when I will later discuss the (de)legitimation strategies of institutional actors and moments of variation in an economic imaginary.

#### **4.3.2 Explanation and contextualisation:**

When discussing explanation, there is the need to focus upon contextualisation. Contextualisation is central within a historical methodology as it allows for the placement of the phenomena within temporal context to emphasise their significance and pertinence to the construction of a historical narrative (Kipping, Wadhvani and Bucheli, 2014; Wadhvani, 2016). The contextualisation of an event or action is also crucial as it denotes that the phenomena are not autonomous and recognises that the event or action has a past and a future (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). Where management and organisation analyses often utilise context to provide background to their research and phenomena, historical research considers context to be the ‘interpreted conditions that place an event or action into a causal or semantic relationship in time’ (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018: 118). Given the focus upon (historical) contingency in both neo-institutionalism and

CPE, this will form a crucial part of my analysis, especially where I emphasise a more relational and processual analysis of change within chapter 6.

Contextualisation and time are established through periodisations and narratives. Periodisations form a large part of my analysis and I will discuss this tool in further detail within my analytical protocol sections. Periodisations are generally constructed in relation to the processes by which phenomena are organised into coherent periods (Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014). The periodisation I employ within my analysis was constructed iteratively through a movement between research questions and analyses of primary and secondary source data (Kipping, Wadhvani and Bucheli, 2014; Lipartito, 2014). Periodisations can vary in duration and this is very much dependent upon the research question and empirical problem; periodisations of a shorter duration tend to focus upon actors and human agency (Levi, 2012). Those periodisations covering a longer duration may be more focused upon structure and the way in which it shapes action (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). My research produced a multi-decade periodisation allowing me to consider social structures, social institutionalism and processes of change (Baumol, 1996). This multi-decade approach to a periodisation enables me to capture the way in which social, political, institutional and intellectual developments form over decades and accounts for what Braudel (1958) calls the ‘multiplicity of time’. Historical methods are thus suited to my study as they allow for the analysis of multi-layered and complex causes and processes of change (Sewell, 2005; Ingram, Rao and Silverman, 2012).

Narrative construction, periodisations and contextualisation work in conjunction with one another. Historical narratives work in a similar way to periodisations in that they organise events, actions and their causes and consequences

in time (Ricoeur, 2004; Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). However, historical narratives differ in the way in which they are typically employed in the social sciences as well as in management and organisation studies (Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014). Gaddis (2002: 62) argues that whereas social scientists ‘tend to embed narratives within generalizations,’ historians tend to ‘embed our generalizations within our narratives.’ So within a historical narrative, there is more emphasis upon the evidence rather than the event or action in question (Megill, 2007). Wadhvani and Decker (2018: 120) highlight that historical narratives differ from chronicles as they are not simply demonstrating a sequence of events. Rather it involves selection of key ‘actors, actions, and events based on the judgements of the historical researcher’, and in pulling ‘these elements together in a plot that creates distinctly multi-causal and inter-dependent explanations.’ The ultimate goal of such historical narratives is to provide a more complete, perhaps alternative, explanation compared with those which already exist. My aim is therefore to incorporate CPE within a neo-institutional framework of analysis.

#### **4.3.3 Actors and interpretation:**

An incremental part of historical research is understanding the subjects of research. Within historical research, this understanding of the subject has in large part been determined by hermeneutic thought (Gadamer, 1975). Hermeneutic thought here relates to the meaning which arises from text and the empathetic understanding and interpretation of this text from the point of view of the author producing it (Stutz and Sachs, 2018). Hermeneutics emphasises the need to interpret and analyse a text by placing it into the broader context in which it was produced (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). This allows for not only the understanding of a specific text produced at a specific time, but also allows for the consideration of the events which preceded

the production of said text, as well as the events and outcomes which occurred.

Contextualisation also offers the opportunity for the consideration of the role of power and language in the creation of discourse and meaning. Subsequently, I turn to CPE methods and CR for further guidance.

#### **4.3.3.1 CPE, CR and interpretation:**

Given the contribution of CPE to this thesis in enabling the extension of the neo-institutionalist framework, I have taken some of my methodological instruction from Sum and Jessop (2013) through the discourse historical approach (DHA) (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; Reisigl, 2018) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2005; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). DHA is pertinent to this research as it encompasses a consideration of historical context and discursive legitimisation strategies (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). Sum and Jessop (2013: 147-148) make note of the three modes of critique inherent in DHA, they comprise

‘(1) an immanent critique of arguments; (2) socio-diagnostic critique based on normative commitments that differ from those articulated, or discoverable, in the texts in question; and (3) a retrospective/prognostic critique connecting the past (including its representations in memory) and the future.’

When connecting these three modes of critique, DHA allows for the movement across co-text, intertextual, interdiscursive relations, extra-linguistic variables and wider institutional frames. This enables me to relate the text in question to wider socio-political and historical contexts within which these texts and discursive practices are embedded (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009; Sum and Jessop,



2013). The focus upon legitimising strategies is relevant to my institutional discussion and analysis in that institutional logics are of a higher higher-order, manifesting themselves through actors' participation in institutions. I must remain vigilant in my analysis of the fact that actors are not always aware of the existence of institutions and, as such, my role as the researcher is to iteratively move between the empirical, wider context and established theory to establish the existence of an institution, a generative mechanism or a causal power (Leca and Naccache, 2006).

In drawing upon CDA, I am depicting analytical dualism (Fairclough, 2005). CDA allows for the analysis of texts in 'both their semiotic and broader social contexts' (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 143). As an approach, CDA endeavours to go beyond textual description to offer explanation and critique. In particular there is a focus upon how language is often linked to notions of ideology and power<sup>7</sup> (Van Dijk, 1993; Van Leeuwen, 2008; Sum and Jessop, 2013). Within CDA, there is an inherent focus upon the way in which power is abused through discourse. This is particularly relevant when discussing powerful elites in relation to public discourse in politics and the media (van Dijk, 2013). This consideration of power and the abuse of power is particularly relevant to my research (notably chapter 6) wherein a key issue, as prompted to be considered by CDA, is 'how attitudes and ideologies are expressed in discourse' (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 144). This is not to say that ideology will be appear somehow naturally within a text. The antecedents of an ideology can reside within the

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<sup>7</sup> CDA is often reduced to the triplet of language, ideology and power (Van Dijk, 1993; Van Leeuwen, 2008)

content and discourse of a text, as can the effects of an ideology and reflections upon an ideology be identifiable in texts (Sum and Jessop, 2013).

#### **4.4 Documents and data collection process:**

The case study of the privatisation of British energy was developed through analysis of government documents (sourced from both physical and online archives, and government websites), organisational documents (physical archives), newspaper articles (from online sources, online and physical archives), government manifestos (online), industry reports (past and present, sourced online) and related literature (memoirs, biographies and academic journals). The following sections will outline the way in which I categorise my data as either primary or secondary in line with historical study. I will also detail my data collection process.

##### **4.4.1 Primary data collection:**

The primary data within this thesis comprises of archival data, mainly in the form of government documents and organisational documents. I consulted draft white papers, parliamentary meeting minutes, committee reports and letters between individuals as sources of information related to energy policy, market policy and regulatory justification and action. Considering such documents is paramount to my research as I am able to trace various iterations of a particular energy or regulatory policy construction and, particularly the role played by any disagreements or tension in the creation of policy. This becomes pertinent later in my identification of moments of crisis, struggle and tension (in chapter 6). What is more, I also ensured that I made note of who the ‘writer’ of the documents was and what its intended

purpose was, as this forms a crucial part of my analysis (again, particularly in chapter 6).

I explored several archives during the data collection process, but there were five archives in particular that were key to my study. Three of the five are physical archives: Kew National Archives, the London Metropolitan Archives and the National Grid Archives. I collected the majority of my data in Kew National Archives and the National Grid archives. Kew National Archives holds many useful official documents, including official inquiry reports, policy documents and meeting records. All of the documents are publicly available so access was not an issue. When documents were housed elsewhere, I was either able to see a redacted version of the document or request it. Data collection at Kew National Archives allowed me to gain some insight into the more governmental or related government bodies' proceedings of change in Britain and the British energy industry 1979-2007, that is the 'official' story of change. The National Grid Archives housed documents more specific to British Gas and as such I was able to capture the organisational (more micro-institutional work) perspective. The documents consulted here ranged from technical documents pertaining to product, supply and organisations to documents wherein managers provided employees with an overview of the changes occurring and the effects the changes were stipulated to have upon them, onto regular employee newsletters.

There were some instances in which I found more informal documents nestled amongst the more formal documents. This often arose in instances in which government officials collected news articles and included them for discussion within the confidential government meetings. I collected less data from the London Metropolitan Archives. Whilst this collection is of a fairly good size, there were not

many documents of relevance to my study stored here. However, those documents that were relevant often pertained to the more social aspects of the change that occurred in Britain and the British Energy industry 1979-2007. Indeed, this is where I found several documents relating to the electricity consumer council and the protection and consideration of the consumer throughout the process of privatisation. An unexpected issue was the lack of data available (or even recorded such, but unavailable) concerning the other focal organisation of this thesis, the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB).

The online archives I consulted were those of the ‘Margaret Thatcher Foundation’ and ‘The Thatcher Papers (housed at Churchill College Cambridge)’. The former is an online archive of historical documents relating to the Thatcher period, and the latter is an online archive containing over 1 million documents from Thatcher’s childhood until the end of her life. Both online archives take great pride in their collections and this was something I had to consider whilst collecting data from both. The Margaret Thatcher Foundation considers itself a charitable organisation that is built upon the ethos of Thatcher. The Thatcher Papers archives actually discuss how their collection is presented with pride and describe their collection as the most significant political archive of the late twentieth century. As well as these online archives, I consulted various media archives (e.g. The Financial Times) to find news articles relating to the discussion of the shift to neoliberalism and privatisation 1979-2007

During my data collection, I relied on a strategy of immersion through familiarisation as outlined by Liu and Grey (2017). They discuss the idea of becoming immersed in the archive by familiarising oneself with the archive materials. The authors also discuss immersion in relation to search strategies arguing

that initial search terms will change once the researcher is more submersed in the archive. My experience of search strategies was similar to this as they evolved in concurrence with my learning and mapping of the archives. Initially, I began searching quite generic and broad terms such as ‘energy’, ‘privatisation’, ‘Margaret Thatcher’ and ‘British Gas’. Once I had familiarised myself with the type of material available, I consulted some of the documents to understand the content, through which I could extract and utilise to answer my overarching research questions. From this immersion, my search strategy became more focused with new keywords formulated.

As the data collection process progressed, I became more conscious of the fact that I would likely need a range of data from multiple sources (i.e. meeting minutes, official reports and news articles) in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the narrative being produced. I also became increasingly aware of the idea that archives and archival materials are not objective, but actually serve to highlight the power ‘of the present to control what the future will know of the past’ (Schwartz and Cook, 2002: 13). In light of this, I consulted background or contextual information before, during and after the data collection process to ensure some form of historical accuracy in the narrative I was building, and also to provide varying perspectives concerning the privatisation of the British energy industry 1979-2007.

#### **4.4.2 Secondary data collection:**

During my data collection process, I recognised the importance of consulting data other than archival data (archival data being data which is collected and stored at the time of writing/occurrence/speech) given the fact that individuals other than

myself curate the documents within the archive. As such, I utilised various forms of secondary data in the form of newspapers and published literature (academic, industrial and biographical). Secondary data also played a crucial role in helping me sift through the large volumes of primary data and the writings of other scholars and individuals interested in a similar context to my research aided the process of theoretical and conceptual refinement, as well as more fundamentally in the process of refinement of research questions. Secondary data is useful in a historical study, particularly when large volumes of primary data are available, as the former aid the researcher in finding a suitable entry point into the primary data collection process. Secondary data can also serve to direct the researcher to unconsidered (but relevant) data (Lipartito, 2014).

The secondary data sources allowed me to rethink and further refine concepts in relation to my research questions. What is more, secondary data also allowed me to question why some primary data was recorded and stored and others were not. Ultimately, 'secondary literature thus provides a way to ask historically relevant questions and offers methodological clues and theoretical insights that can reconceptualise the primary sources (Lipartito, 2014: 292). What this essentially allows me to do is read against the grain. As such, a simple financial report can offer me more than insights into the financial position of a firm; when viewed in a historical light, such documents can be highly indicative of the way in which practices, strategies and regulatory frameworks have changed over time (Fligstein, 1990; Lipartito, 2014).

Newspaper articles form an important part of my secondary data. Given the transformational change which occurred during the processes of privatising domestic energy, coupled with the fact that the British consumer now had a greater stake in the

privatising organisations (as not only consumers but also shareholders); the media became a crucial tool for various organisations in monitoring public and wider perceptions. Newspaper articles were also important in tracing the tensions and struggles between certain key individuals during the privatisation process (e.g. Sir Denis Rooke, chairman of British Gas, and Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy). I was aware of this fact prior to entering the archive and I was unsurprised to find news articles within governmental meeting minutes and records. What I did find telling as such was the fact that the National Grid Archives had such a large collection of newspaper clippings housed amongst internal organisational records. Figure 4 depicts just a handful of the volumes of newspaper clippings collected and recorded by the organisation.



Figure 3 Volumes of newspaper clippings (National Grid Archives)

Much of the archival government, newspaper and, to some extent, organisational data collected shared the objective of convincing the wider society of its perspective

and to legitimate the neoliberal privatisation strategies. *Table 1* illustrates the amounts and types of data collected over the duration of my data collection process.

*Table 1 Data type, sources and amount collected*<sup>8</sup>

Data type	Category	Source	Amount
Government/Parliamentary meeting minutes and/or official documents/ Regulation and/or regulatory bodies	Primary	Kew National Archives; London Metropolitan Archives	25 main files (each with 50-150 images of documents)
Legislation and/or White Papers	Primary	Kew National Archives;	11
Party Manifestos (Conservative/Labour)	Secondary	Party website	12
British Gas internal records	Primary	National Grid Archives	13 main files (348 images of documents)
CEGB internal records	Primary	Kew National Archives; London Metropolitan Archives	6 main files (81 images of documents)
Thatcher's speeches and personal records	Primary	Thatcher Network Archives	27

<sup>8</sup> Primary and Secondary data are taken from an historians perspective. This follows on from my previous differentiation of primary/secondary data relating source criticism (section 4.3.1, pp.174-177) and historical perspectives addressed in business and management journals (see Decker, 2013; Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker, 2014; Wadhvani and Decker, 2018; Wadhvani *et al.*, 2018).



Media	Secondary	Online archives and media sources	30
Academic journals (specific to privatising British utilities)	Secondary	Online repositories	30
Industry reports	Primary/ Secondary	Kew National Archives; Academic sources; government websites	15

#### 4.4.3 Interacting with the archives:

Having outlined the archives, I have visited throughout my data collection, and the various forms of data I have collected from said archives (and online sources), I feel it necessary to give the reader some insight into how I interacted with the archives and how this shaped the construction of my narratives within the empirical chapters. Throughout the data collection process, I often felt overwhelmed by the abundance of information available. Coupled with the fact that the relevant period of time has received a wealth of attention from both academics and the media, this left me with the problem of excess. Particularly during my initial visits to archives: I would arrive feeling prepared and knowledgeable, but then be frustrated with documentation overload. Popp and Fellman (2017: 1245) also acknowledge this feeling and remark ‘the historian’s struggle with knowledge creation often begins as we encounter the archive’.

Doing historical research is an iterative process with feedback loops between every phase of research. It is the on-going movement between sources, existing scholarship, theory and existing narratives (Popp and Fellman, 2017). The iterative nature of historical research often meant that each time I interacted with the archives I would find that the general direction of my research and questions I had would change or shift (*see appendices C1-C1.6 for development*). This generally happened because whilst I was certain of the type of documents I was looking for before entering the archive (and I would often order these documents prior to my visits), I could not help but to be immersed in unexpected narratives emerging out of the data, or to be interested in the words of individuals I did not expect to study. Decker (2013:6) claims that ‘many historical narratives are first formed in the archive where researchers engage with the voices and silences of the past’. This resonates highly

with my experience and, as a result, it should be asserted that the archive and the narrative are 'intimately entwined and not easily separated' (Decker, 2013:6). Whilst the goal of my empirical chapters is to produce a narrative, the archives to some extent contain the narrative. Ketelaar (2001:135) refers to the tacit narratives of the archives, and the tacit narratives that are 'hidden in categorization, codification and labelling.' The idea that a narrative is tacit to Ketelaar suggests that he believes they are hidden and waiting to be discovered by the researcher or historian. Steedman (1998) has even previously argued that archival materials could not be classed as sources until the historian discovers them and thus gives them voice. However, going back to Ketelaar's comments about categorization, coding and labelling, it is easy to forget the significance of this when you enter the archive. The way in which an archive is organised is significant. The archive is not neutral; it is curated. The archive itself and the practices within are highly institutionalised. The way in which documents are categorised, indexed and chosen for preservation define the type of archival knowledge that can be accessed and the societal memories which are to be remembered. Thus, it has been argued that the archive does not offer us a true representation of the past, rather it provides us with a mediated representation of the past (Trouillot, 1997). From this perspective, the archive gives us access to an event as it is recorded and archived, and not to the event itself.

All these issues must be problematised, and considered when interacting with and building an historical narrative from the archive. The realisation that through problematisation I am better able to understand my position within and relationship to the archive allows me to understand that there is an element of subjectivity within historical research and the collection of archival data.

#### **4.4 Analytical protocol**

In designing my analytical protocol, I was also very aware that I was presenting both institutional findings and CPE findings over two separate chapters, but they still had to be in dialogue with one another as the goal of this thesis is to extend the institutional framework through CPE. I was also cautious of the fact that I did not want to reproduce history, but rather reconstruct history from the vantage point of my extended institutionalist approach to contribute to neo-institutionalism. My analytical task was made slightly more difficult as the institutional portion of my empirical analysis called for categorisation in order to identify institutions, institutional logics and institutional work, whilst the CPE analysis called for a relational approach, but presenting the empirical analysis in such a way was necessary to extend the neo-institutional framework.

##### **4.4.1 Analysing institutions, institutional logics and institutional work**

(RQ1) probes into the changing institutional logics and how these changes were enacted by key players within the market. The research questions 1(a) ask about the changing institutional logics at the organisational field level. 1(b) asks how organisations responded to and initiated changing logics at the field level. The first step I had to take before embarking upon any analysis was to set out the parameters for what constitutes an institution, an institutional field, an institutional logic and institutional work, and how I would identify these units of analysis within my data. This process was very much guided by my literature review in chapter 2 and these analytical parameters are illustrated in table 1.

Table 2 Identifying neo-institutional units of analysis from data

Theoretical concept	Defined by literature	Unit(s) of analysis and indicator(s) within data
Institutional field	The exchange field and related membership (Zietsma <i>et al.</i> , 2017)	<i>Members of the field include:</i> Producers; suppliers; organisations; regulatory bodies; consumers; governmental bodies; and individual and/or collective actors which are specifically related.
Institutional logics	The material practices, beliefs, rules, norms, values and assumptions within institutions, which allow individuals to organise time and space and provide meaning to social reality (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a)	The ‘higher-order’ ideas, beliefs and values which influence, constrain or enable action.
		Prior to the 1980s- discourse pertaining to nationalisation indicating the nationalised logics (welfare state, social compromise, collectivism)
		Post-1980s- discourse relating to neoliberalism and privatisation indicating the market logics (competition, free markets, free trade and efficiency)

Theoretical concept	Defined by literature	Unit(s) of analysis and indicator(s) within data
		Discourse relating to the legitimation and de-legitimation of logics.
		Multiple logics- environmental jolts which foreground competing logics
Institution	The structures which are important to social life (Hodgson, 2006)	Legislative branches of government; bank; firms; regulators; and trade unions
	Organisations or social bodies which are significant for wider society (Greenwood <i>et al.</i> , 2008; Sum and Jessop, 2013)	
Institutional work	The purposive action of individuals. The creation, maintenance and disruption of institutions (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006).	<i>Political work:</i> The generation of social support through the recruitment of relevant actors and the establishment of rules and regulations. <i>Relevant actors can include and emerge from:</i> dominant players with specific industry experience; actors from specific professional or regulatory bodies; and actors who are either

Theoretical concept	Defined by literature	Unit(s) of analysis and indicator(s) within data
		governmentally or politically relevant to the energy industry.
	Political, technological and cultural work (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008).	<i>Technical work</i> : Adding rigour to new practices (theorisation); The reduction of ambiguities of said practice and actual implementation (standardisation); and the alignment of new practice with common practice (mimicry).
	Intentionality and effort (Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca, 2011).	<i>Cultural work</i> : New practices are framed by activities which appeal to a wider audience. The promotion of discourse which associate new practice with widely accepted norms and values

In conducting my data analysis, I employed the computer software ATLAS.ti. This software is a workbench for the qualitative data analysis of large bodies of textual and graphic data. I used this software to aid me in arranging and managing the copious volume of material to hand. Given that ATLAS.ti was created by grounded theorists, I was able to avoid the more step-by-step and systematic categorisation of data which is perhaps less suited to historical research methods (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018). ATLAS.ti allowed for the movement across data and was especially usefully for the creation of timelines and periodisations. I also prefer to make hand-written notes, so often when I was dealing with a more complex event; I would print out my data, categorise by hand and physically make connections between key language and pieces of data. My research diary became an important part of my analytical process.

The initial round of coding set out to identify and unpack key events, issues, debates, actors, legislation and policy from the data. I consulted published works and key industrial reports to see what others found incremental to the narrative, but also to ensure that I was able to identify specific environmental jolts which were crucial to the story of change and the process of privatising British energy production and supply (Sine and David, 2003). The resulting codes were predominantly descriptive and allowed me to ‘get to grips’ with my data and draw general inferences about key events. At this stage, I also began to contextualise the period preceding the 1980s in order to discuss the historical contingency of institutional logics in my more in-depth analysis stages. Given the extensive time period covered in my empirical chapters, I have included a timeline at the beginning of chapter 5 to provide a chronological overview of key events and when key actors came to power (either in a political, organisational, industrial or regulatory role), with a brief description of their implications. This timeline can act as a key point of reference for the reader, particularly as within chapter 6, I will be providing illustrative analysis of the way in which temporality is



non-linear and that there are various spatio-temporal horizons at play within the privatisation process.

The next stage of my analysis was to explore the initially coded key events, issues, debates, actors, legislation and policy in further depth. This round of more in-depth coding was informed by literature and specifically focused upon institutional logics. Within this phase, there was the incorporation of the broad meta-theory of institutional logics as outlined by Thornton and Ocasio (2008) in chapter 2. As such there was a focus upon the embeddedness of agency, society as an inter-institutional system, institutions across multiple levels, the material and cultural foundation of institutional logics and historical contingency (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a). This stage was also allowed a focus on specific discourses relating to (de)legitimation strategies. The (de)legitimation strategies provided some insight into institutional structures and higher-level institutional order and logics. My research diary came into play as I was able to note where I had observed patterns of language and ideas relating to specific (de)legitimation strategies. I repeated this analysis with a specific focus on institutional work. Coding in this stage related to the identification of actors (collective or individual) responsible for institutional work, the type of institutional work enacted (political, technical or cultural), at what level of analysis this work was carried out (e.g. organisational or governmental) and, finally, whether the intention behind the work carried out was to create, maintain or disrupt institutions (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006).

The majority of the data analysed within the institutional empirical chapter is from primary sources (with the exception of data covered within the initial round of coding which were used for contextualisation/background-building purposes). The main goal of this empirical chapter is to produce a neo-institutional narrative which chronologically maps the changes which occurred during the privatisation processes. My aim is not to further these

fundamental frameworks, but to assess their utility in their current form as learnt from popular, widely cited and -employed neo-institutional literature. This chapter thus acts as a foundation from which I can build my CPE analysis to demonstrate how CPE can extend this institutionalist framework, a framework which allows for the analysis of concepts such as power, politics and elite interests which has been somewhat lost within neo-institutional frameworks.

#### **4.4.2 Analysing the imaginary, hegemony and intellectuals**

My first empirical chapter (chapter 5) serves to answer RQ1 and its sub questions and is designed to provide a neo-institutional empirical foundation from which I can build an alternative institutional approach through CPE concepts and analysis. The second empirical chapter of this thesis (chapter 6) targets (RQ2) what imaginary is present during the privatisation of the British energy sector? And its sub-questions 2(a) how did this imaginary come into being? 2(b) how does an imaginary change and evolve? 2(c) how can an imaginary be translated into policy and legislation?

My findings and analysis from chapter five relating to the specific institutional logics and institutional work identified in the transition from a national to market logic in the privatisation process of energy will be carried forward into the CPE empirical chapter. These findings are developed to provide interpretations pertaining to the relational aspects of structure and agency, specific selectivities, hegemony and intellectuals. Whilst secondary data was used for more contextualisation or background purposes in chapter 5 (as per neo-institutionalist research), secondary data will become key in chapter 6 as documents such as speeches by key political figures at the time give me a sense of the overarching imaginary and direction of ideology of the time. News articles, manifestos, biographies and reports also

become useful as they allow for the analysis of wider public perceptions of events and actors related to those events, to some extent, this allows for the consideration of sense and meaning making (semiosis). The way in which I identify these units of analysis from data is outlined in table 2.

Key to this second empirical chapter is the analysis of the economic imaginaries present during the privatisation of the energy market 1979-2007. The core element of this empirical part will be a periodisation of the hegemonic (macro) imaginary relating to overarching political ideology of Britain from 1979-2007, and subsequently the production of more sector-specific imaginaries concerning energy markets and the privatisation of industry. I have already mentioned the importance of periodisations and their concurrence with the production of historical narratives in section 4.3.2. The following sections will further discuss periodisations as an analytical tool.

Table 3 Identifying CPE units of analysis from data

Theoretical concept	Defined by literature	Unit(s) of analysis and indicator(s) within data
Neoliberalism	Market-oriented policy-making (Dean, 2012); Ideology and competition (Amable, 2010); Private property rights, free trade and free markets (Harvey, 2005); The state has a role to play (Harvey, 2005); New Labour (Amable, 2010); Against capitalism based upon collectivism or social-democratic compromise (Amable, 2010).	<i>Reference to:</i> Competition, creation of competition; market mechanisms; efficiency; markets and capital creation; financialisation; market regulation and self-regulation; entrepreneurialism.
(Economic) Imaginaries	Mental maps or entry-points into explaining and understanding a complex reality (Jessop, 2012b; Sum and Jessop, 2013.)	Strategies; projects; the mobilisation of support from the public and elites; the determination, privileging or stabilising of economic activities and relations; capitalism; (in) compatibility of relations.
Generative mechanisms	Variation, selection and retention (Sum and Jessop, 2013).	Moments of crisis or shock; multiple strategies, projects or policies are in play (imaginaries); competing imaginaries; change and/or

Theoretical concept	Defined by literature	Unit(s) of analysis and indicator(s) within data
		adaptation; the politicisation of discourses and practices.
Strategic selectivities	Agential (Sum and Jessop, 2013).	Social agents (individual or collective); The capacities and abilities of social agents.
	Discursive (Sum and Jessop, 2013).	Discourse, language and genres; hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses; the limiting and enabling nature of discourse in producing hegemony.
	Structural (Sum and Jessop, 2013).	The reproduction of social forms; Certain structures privilege certain interests, actors, strategies and tactics.
	Technological (Sum and Jessop, 2013).	Codes of conduct; governmentality and governance; policy and legislation; codes of practice within the firm.
Historic bloc	Social practices both create and are created by values and theories which rationalise practice (Sum and Jessop , 2013); Complex and contradictory (Gramsci, 1980).	The relationship between the political, ideological and the economic; the rationalisation of practice; neoliberalism as an ideology in

Theoretical concept	Defined by literature	Unit(s) of analysis and indicator(s) within data
		relation to the economy, public policy and governance.
Hegemony and counter-hegemony	Domination through social practices through coercion or consent (Sum and Jessop, 2013); Capabilities of dominant social groups to exert political, intellectual and leadership domination over subordinate groups (Ramos, 1982); The transformation and rearticulation of an old hegemony into a new world view (Gramsci, 1980).	Struggle, conflict and tension relating to old and new hegemonies or world views; ideological struggle; individuals and agency with specific functions and roles in society in producing hegemony; articulation of hegemonic principle; different classes or groups within society.
Intellectuals	Organic intellectuals across horizontal dimension whom are part of the dominant class. They spread ideology, are of political importance and are historically contingent. Instrumental in the struggle for hegemony (Gramsci, 1980).	Organic intellectuals found in political parties; individuals who are tied to the economic and political needs of the dominant class; those individuals who are trying to pursue and legitimise neoliberalism as a progressive reform; those individuals who seek change; Counter-hegemonic organic intellectuals.

<b>Theoretical concept</b>	<b>Defined by literature</b>	<b>Unit(s) of analysis and indicator(s) within data</b>
	<p>Traditional intellectuals across vertical dimensions. Seemingly have no particular class interest; seemingly remain objective but can advocate the interests of the dominant social group (particularly in times of crisis or change). Linked to civil society and involved in the mode of production (Gramsci, 1980; Sum and Jessop, 2013).</p>	<p>Individuals who are part of the institutions which reinforce hegemonic order e.g. universities, newspapers, think tanks, state employees, organisations and regulatory bodies.</p>

#### **4.4.2.1 Problematising periodisations**

##### **4.4.2.1.1 Time and temporality**

Historical research involves the systematic study of the past and a concern with time. The basic measures of time (clock-time and calendrical systems) have become taken-for-granted tools in the discussion of the past, particularly when considering the added meaning we often associate with these tools and the metaphors we as researchers place on time periods. For example, 'The Great Depression' of 1929-1939 highlights the way in which a period in the past can conjure up immediate understanding, emotions and knowledge (Jordanova, 2000). This meaning-laden period metaphor not only communicates the economic downturn, but is also represented as a period of changing ideologies, social degradation, and cultural and political change. Dividing the past up into periods is not just a case of dividing time up into manageable chunks, it is also a means by which thoughts and ideas can be organised and subsequently analysed.

Time and temporality are key to archival research, as is the distinction between time and temporality and the implications of this for my research (and any historical research studies of organisations and institutions). In addition to linear clock-time, I therefore also consider temporal perspectives and the temporalities of social life (Sewell, 2005). Temporal perspectives are key to understanding sense-making and meaning-making of issues that exist within society which requires an understanding that locates social events (or critical juncture/moment of change) to different temporalities (Sewell, 2005). Archival data allows me to trace the processes of change, but also allows for understanding of where significant change may take place. For example, where policymaking is concerned, the effects of a new policy may not be felt immediately and are more than likely to manifest themselves after



some years. This is true for the modes of operation and behaviour of organisations, and is something that is salient in the context of the organisation I will be investigating (British Gas).

Periodisations are distinguishable from other historical analytical tools. For example, chronicles record events and statistics in calendric time and narratives plot events in a story-like and sequential manner with an overarching structure (Jessop, 2003). Chronologies are sometimes considered as interchangeable with periodisations. However, a key difference for me is that periodisations it reflect a complex relationship between structure and agency. This is a strategic-relational ontology which emphasizes the mutuality and reciprocity of the dialectic between structure and agency (Jessop, 1990, 2002). Other fundamental differences between chronologies and periodisations exist: a chronology tends to order events or periods in a more ‘clock-time’ fashion, whilst periodisations utilise several time scales and recognise the temporality of the phenomena. A periodisation as a tool for analysis also allows for the recognition of multiple time horizons when discussing actions, events or periods (Jessop, 2003). This latter point relates back to my earlier discussion of periodisations as covering long, short or multi-decade durations (Wadhvani and Decker, 2018).

Typically, a chronology discusses the idea of ‘temporal coincidence’ wherein the actions, events and periods are viewed in a more positive manner grouped together by their occurrence within different time intervals. Conversely, a periodisation tends to focus upon conjunctures which often demarcates the way in which actions, events and periods are ordered into phases or stages. These conjunctural implications take into account different social forces, different time horizons and different sites and scales of actions (Jessop, 2003). This moves the

discussion of temporalities beyond the more linear style of a chronology, and encompasses the more chaotic implications as well as context of the passage of time. This is perhaps most clearly related to the strategic-relational approach; a strategic-relational periodisation is useful because it is concerned with the ‘strategic possibilities any given period gives for different actors, identities, interests, coalition possibilities, horizons of action, strategies, and tactics’ (Jessop, 2003: 4).

The final difference between chronology and periodisation pertains to the construction of narratives (and directly relates to the discussion of dualisms, narrative construction and the issues of time/space). A chronology is focused upon a positivistic perspective of temporal coincidence/succession; with the narratives constructed tend to be simple in their explanatory capacities. Periodisations, on the other hand, are based on explanatory frameworks. The narratives produced from a periodisation are immediately more complex because of the way in which this framework allows for the discussion of the more ‘contingent necessities’ that occur when multiple events are being discussed over multiple time horizons (Jessop, 2001b, 2003).

Building on this final point regarding narratives and time, Fear (2014) considers the ways in which we can historicise organisational learning and change, providing a bridge for the discussion of organisations, historical research and the use (and need) for periodisations. He argues that single historical case studies can be quite robust in their reliability, validity and insightfulness if the data collection methods, arrangement of data and artefacts from the past are presented clearly, and that the produced insights are positioned well within a historiography and/or theoretical debates and issues. Fear (2014: 177) argues that the theoretical issues and debates raised by a case study must be embedded in time, place or periodisation and

contends that stories should be the friend, not foe of a researcher. Historical research establishes causation and relates ‘multiple events, actions, and actors’ reasons to the past, present, and future developments based on multiple layers of causation’ (Fear, 2014: 177). Resonating with Jessop’s viewpoint, whilst Fear discusses historical research and periodisations in a cause-effect manner, he recognises that within periodisations there exist multiple sites and scales of action and various actors in play. What is more, Fear (2014) notes that the various temporalities in periodisation draw attention not only to the past, but also the present and future.

#### **4.4.2.1.2 Identifying key periods**

To begin to problematise the issue of time in periodisations, it is necessary to question the identification of key dates and key events that determine the resulting periods. In her book *History in Practice*, historian Jordanova (2000) claims that the relationship between key dates and periodisation is complex and unavoidable, and that the decision to use key events to define a period often highly value-laden and directly influences the stories which are told. The selected key events become symbols prompting the production of particular stories with particular emphases (Jordanova, 2000). The use of key events often signify moments of dramatic change, these historical indicators are described by Jordanova (2000: 122) as having ‘a mystique to them; perhaps they are the historical equivalent of a rite de passage’. But what does this mean for the effort to periodise? Historians (as with other disciplines), she argues, seek to build upon abstractions. They seek to construct or ‘project humanoid features onto abstractions’ in order to imagine past societies along with their symbolic changes and transitions (Jordanova, 2000: 122).

Using key events serves to unify and package moments of change or transition. This is not to say that unification means a collective opinion concerning the moment of change, but rather that it establishes the significance of the key event in question. Speaking further to this idea of key events as entry points, periodisations allow us to address the ‘natural’ boundaries we put in place upon the phenomena. I have used the term ‘we’ here purposefully, as some onus needs to be placed upon the researcher because these natural boundaries are not fixed, they are latent or non-bounded until a researcher determines the boundaries of a periodisation. They are non-bounded because of the subjectivity of research agendas and interests, as well as the interconnectivity of ideas and phenomena. The job of historians, and indeed any researcher seeking to utilise periodisations within their work, is to question and problematise the proposed ‘natural’ boundaries, and to critically analyse the suggested entry points in the discussion of key events.

Phillips (2002) similarly deals with the issue of key dates and events and further comments upon the nature and implications the use of exact dates can have upon research. It is argued that the precise date given to an event by a researcher can be somewhat misleading (Thomson, 1969): ‘exact dates are always a matter of historical, didactic, or journalistic expediency’ (Hobsbawm, 2000: 2-3). Dates in historical research are no doubt a matter of convenience, if not convention, and become useful tools from which historical research and discussion can be built. However some events which are of great significance and exist in very particular portions of time require stronger criteria for selection that moves beyond convenience and convention (Phillips, 2002). With regard to these significant events is the need to identify certain differences and discontinuity as factors in the distinction of periods of time. A determining characteristic is the idea that change is

imminent, that the change during the key event in question signifies a point up to which a particular way of doing things will cease to exist after the passing of that key event, and another quite different way of doing things will emerge (Phillips, 2002).

Jessop has written extensively about periodisations, their purpose and value when undertaking (historical) research. Jessop (2001: 283) highlights that the main purpose of a periodisation is to interpret the passage of historical time by ‘classifying events and/or processes in terms of their internal affinities and external differences in order to identify successive periods of relative invariance and the transitions between them’. The ontological assumption of periodisations is that there is a paradoxical existence of both continuity and discontinuity in the passage of historical time.

Without the simultaneity of continuity and discontinuity, a periodisation would either be rendered meaningless as events/processes would be tantamount and eternal, or highly randomised and chaotic with no distinguishable sequential order (Jessop, 2001b, 2003). Continuity can therefore pertain even when there are changes as long as they do not heavily alter the structural coherence of a given period. Discontinuity, on the other hand, implies that certain changes disrupt the previous structural coherence (Jessop, 2003). Periods involving changes or disruptions may possess their own logics (e.g. neoliberal state objectives) and may possess experimental properties wherein different actors struggle against one another, not least during transitional phases in seeking some form of structural coherence (e.g. the trial and error nature of the way in which the imaginary becomes enacted into policy and legislation, and competing hegemonies/logics). What remains fundamental to any periodisation is that the phenomena and time period under study has been through an inevitable alternation of relative continuity and discontinuity (Jessop, 2003).

#### **4.4.3 The periodisation of imaginaries in this thesis:**

As I mentioned earlier, the CPE empirical portion of this thesis acts on a more illustrative dimension to demonstrate CPE's contribution to my extended institutionalist approach. The formation of a periodisation in my research is crucial as an analytical tool as it not only allows for the consideration of CPE concepts and tools, but as an institutionally sensitive approach. It thus allows for the integration and consideration of institutional logics and works. Given that RQ2 and its sub-questions are focused upon identifying imaginaries during the privatisation of the British energy sector, how they come into being, how they evolve and the way in which they are translated into policy and legislation, I will periodise economic imaginaries within this thesis, with a particular focus on the neoliberal economic imaginary. The economic imaginary in this thesis will initially be considered from a political angle with a particular focus on neoliberalism. I will consider the formation and identification of a viable imaginary as through engaging with published academic works and news articles; I was able to determine that the election of Margaret Thatcher and her conservative government was a crucial turning point for the discussion of not only neoliberal ideology, but also neoliberal ideology at the political level and its connection to the institutional exchange field (encompassing organisations, regulatory bodies and the consumer) and the economic level. This adds to my analysis and discussion of organisations as highly politicised and aids the discussion of the political intent and nature of change processes.

In Jessop's (2015) paper *Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherism: Dead but not buried*. Jessop provides a subjective but meaningful interpretation and thus periodisation of Thatcherism, which operates on a more aggregate level of discussion

and analysis (particularly when considered in relation to the context of this thesis). While it does refer to specific actors, issues, strategies contexts and temporal constraints, and it does indeed go some way towards enabling the discussion of Thatcherism as a specific economic, social and political project (Jessop, 2007; 2015), it does not explore the sector-specific politics and effects of Thatcherism. It does not explore Thatcherism in relation to, for instance, the education, health or energy sectors. Moreover, the periodisation presented by Jessop is not the only way to distinguish the different phases of Thatcherism, and the author himself recognises this highlighting that ‘analyses constructed for other purposes might well-distinguish other phases, stages and steps or even question whether there was ever a distinctive period worth calling Thatcherism’ (Jessop, 2015: 18). Whilst Jessop’s initial periodisation of Thatcherism as a political imaginary is useful (Appendix B outlines various other common representations of Thatcherism), it acts as a guide from which I have tailored the periodisation of Thatcherism to the British energy industry

The periodisation of Thatcherism offered by Jessop is a useful tool as it has further enabled me to organise the empirical research, the conceptual development, the identification of units of analysis and mobilisation of data elements in this research project. Following Jessop’s periodisation has allowed for the development of an analytical template from which I can not only present the narrative of the narrative of the changes that occurred in the British energy industry, but also the creation of an analytical template that can guide me through my data analysis. Further to this, Jessop’s periodisation has allowed me to plot key data against the more aggregate periodisation of Thatcherism, as well as identify the key narrative that existed within the periods identified across differing levels of analysis and in relation to various members of the exchange field. This is crucial to the contribution

of my thesis in developing an extended institutional approach for the discussion of institutional change as it has illustrated that change processes are not ‘neat’ and linear as institutional theory tend to suggest. Thus the imaginary is a useful conceptual tool as it begins to mitigate against this. However, what it has served to strengthen is the need for a more context specific periodisation that can be discussed alongside a more aggregate level periodisation of change. The initial plotting of data in relation to the imaginary and encompassing institutional logics and institutional work is illustrated in table 3 below.

The framework and periodisation outlined in table 3 is intended to highlight that whilst all the scales of operation within a system are different, they cannot always be separate and these levels cross-cut each other when one level is discussed. For example, in a highly political context such as the British energy industry during 1979-2007, it is difficult to discuss changes at the firm level without discuss changes at both the institutional and political level. If I addressed only one level, then I would be falling back into the more linear neo-institutional discussion of change. What is also important to note here is that the discussion of change is not determined by the power of the level, thus change can be discussed from both a ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up- perspective. Table 3 also demonstrates that while I utilise primary data from the archives within this empirical chapter, there is also a distinct use of secondary data. Secondary data pertaining to key speeches of the time serve to enable the identification of the hegemonic visions of the dominant social classes and the prospective translation of political ideas to institutions, operations and practices. The secondary data employed within the production of my sector-specific periodisation is also crucial as it allows for the tracing of wider perceptions of the neoliberal imaginary and more evidently documents conflicts, tensions and struggles



outside of the policy-making setting. These conflicts, tensions and struggles are not relegated to ideology and policy, but also relate to individuals and discussions surrounding key individuals and their conflicting views.

Table 4 Populating Jessop's periodisation with concepts and data

Period	1979-1982	1982-1987	1988-1990	1990-1997	1997-2010
Imaginary: Intellectuals Political power Legislative power Hegemonic conflicts	<p>‘Future narrative’</p> <p>The British economy is referred to as an ‘ill patient’ whose time is running out- changes need to be made before time runs out</p> <p>Hegemonic battle between economic ‘wet’ and ‘dries’</p> <p>Hegemonic battle between Keynesians and economic liberals/neoliberals</p>	<p>‘A strong state &amp; two nations narrative’</p> <p>More radical programme of neoliberalism- neoliberal accumulation strategy</p> <p>Hegemonic battle with Labour continued with Conservative gaining ground and power</p>	<p>‘Demise of Thatcher narrative’</p> <p>Economic issues and inflation</p> <p>Counter-hegemonies began to grow and challenged the dominant Thatcherite hegemonic project</p>	<p>‘A new future narrative’</p> <p>Thatcher rhetoric remains strong</p> <p>Hegemonic battle between Conservatives and Labour</p> <p>1990 John Major Prime Minister (Conservative minority)- Thatcher recognizes demise of her own name</p>	<p>‘The third way narrative’</p> <p>New Labour achieve hegemony, but hegemony with a neoliberal twist</p> <p>1997 Tony Blair (Labour)</p> <p>2007 Gordon Brown (Labour)</p> <p>Policy and politics shifts towards nuclear energy privatisation</p>

		A battle between political society and civil society with the miners' strike			
Institutional Logics	National to market logic  Delegitimisation of nationalisation	Legitimising market logic  Sub logics of the market logics emerge and compete (financial, regulatory and ownership)	Market logic remains dominant although delegitimised to some degree  Sub financial, regulatory and ownership logics remain with the regulatory logic becoming prominent	Renewed market logic emerges, re-legitimisation  Counter and competing logics emerge through Labour rhetoric	Market logic is re-packaged and re-legitimised through varying discourse
Institutional work	Creation and disruption	Disruption and maintenance	Disruption and maintenance	Creation and maintenance	Maintenance

Generative mechanism  Extended institutional framework	Variation in ideology  Selection of actors	Retention of policy  Variation of actors  Selection of actors  Further retention of policy and regulation	Variations, selection and retention of key actors  Variation of policy and regulation  Selection and retention of policy and regulation	Retention of privatisation policies  Variation, selection and retention of key actors	Variation, selection and retention of key policy and regulation
Example from data (Primary and secondary):  White paper and Green papers  Parliamentary records (PREM)	Thatcher radio interview for IRN- 'There is no alternative'  Ridley Report (1977)  PREM- British Gas Corporation Legislation  Party election manifesto	Thatcher TV interview for LWT's Weekend World (1983)  Thatcher interview for BBC's Panorama- 'creating the right	Thatcher Radio interview for BBC Radio 2's Jimmy young Show- explaining the 'there is no such thing as society' comment (1988)	Thatcher comments to journalists in Downing Street (1990)  Thatcher statement confirming resignation (1990)	Article for <i>Daily Telegraph</i> ("The boneless wonder of New Labour") 1997  PREM- 1996-1997 Nuclear power privatisation: Nuclear Electric Plc contracting

<p>Law</p> <p>Thatcher speeches; interviews; appearances (dominant narratives)</p> <p>News articles</p>		<p>conditions for industries to flourish’ (1984)</p> <p>Thatcher interview with Women’s Own- ‘there is no such thing as society’ (1987)</p> <p>PREM- 1985-1986</p> <p>Establishment of the office of gas supply (OFGAS)</p> <p>PREM- 1987-1988</p> <p>British Gas Corporation Privatisation</p>	<p>White Paper- 1988</p> <p>Privatizing electricity: Government’s proposals for the privatisation of electricity supply industry in England/Wales</p> <p>PREM 1988-1989</p> <p>Electricity Privatisation: General papers</p> <p>Party election manifesto</p>	<p>Thatcher interview for Newsweek Magazine- ‘Thatcherism will live. It will live long after Thatcher has died...’</p> <p>PREM- 1990 Water and electricity privatisation</p> <p>Party election manifesto</p>	<p>round 1996-1997; allocation of electricity contracts</p> <p>Party election manifesto</p>
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		Party election manifesto			
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#### **4.5 Chapter summary and conclusions:**

In this chapter, I have outlined my methodology and mechanisms that allow for an appropriate way for me to explore my research questions. I have considered a critical realist ontology in line with Sum and Jessop's (2013) CPE and related this critical realist ontology to neo-institutional research to demonstrate its potential compatibility and utility. I have also outlined the general research design including the research setting, the nature of this research as a historical study and provided considerations of primary and secondary data, my data collection processes and my analytical protocol. I have also engaged with the dialogue relating to archival data collection, explored what it means to use an archive, utilising archival data and the credibility of archival data.

In considering a historical study in relation to CR, ontologically it recognises the importance of context (Leca and Naccache, 2006). Time and the passage of time are important as they hold some relevance in both shaping and understanding society and social outcomes, particularly given the fact that individuals are faced with and have to overcome challenges constantly throughout history (Houston, 2010). In this sense Marx's (1973b: 146) declaration that 'the tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of living' holds much relevance for my research, but any study with some historical consideration. From a CR standpoint, any outcome is the product of context, generative mechanisms, causal powers and, crucially, time. I have also learned from authors who have focused upon textual data and discourse analysis within both an institutional and CR framework (I have also

previously discussed discursive institutionalism in section 3.2.1) and applied these insights to the historical method discussed earlier in this section.

In outlining my analytical protocols for the neo-institutional portion and the CPE empirical portions of this thesis, I demonstrated how each respectively enable me to empirically analyse, interpret and discuss (RQ1) what were the changing institutional logics and how were these changes enacted by key players within the market? As well as (RQ2) what imaginary is present during the privatisation of the British energy sector? My thinking behind presenting these two conceptual frameworks separately is to demonstrate first the utility and also limitations of the neo-institutional approach focusing upon institutional logics and institutional work, but then also to provide a foundation from which I can build an extended and illustrative framework to demonstrate the utility of CPE in the construction of an extended institutional approach. Indeed, ultimately the goal of this thesis is to answer **(RQ3)** what are the connections and/or disconnections in the theoretical and empirical accounts of neo-institutional and cultural political economy frameworks?



## **Chapter 5: Privatising British Energy; a Neo-institutionalist Approach**

This empirical chapter serves to provide institutional findings and analysis, of dominant institutional logics and institutional work in the privatisation of gas and electricity supply to the United Kingdom, with a specific focus upon focal organisations British Gas (BG) and the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB). In analysing the institutional logics at the exchange field level, I will present the dominant national logic in the pre-privatisation period from 1942-79. I then move on to the analysis of the shifting nature of institutional logics as a result of specific environmental jolts (Sine and David, 2003), namely the context surrounding the implementation of a new Conservative programme to explore the multiplicity of institutional logics at the (Exchange) field level (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a; Greenwood *et al.*, 2011; Zietsma *et al.*, 2017). Here I will specifically focus upon the shift from a national market logic to a private market logic (1979-1997) and explore the related beliefs and values of each. Finally, within the third and final part of this first section, I will analyse a further shift in institutional logics and present findings related to the public-private logic which emerged after the election of a New Labour 1997. Whilst the level of discussion in this section is relatively micro in the sense that it occurs at the level of the exchange-field, there will be some macro consideration of the political and political structures as proxies to aid the analysis of the socially constructed institutional logics (Zilber, 2013)

Analysis pertaining to institutional work refers to the ‘ongoing labour that takes place on the ground, and dedicated to creating, maintain, and changing institutions’ (Zilber, 2013: 85). Institutional work is identified through various types of work that occurred at the organisational level. The types of work will be outlined in relation to the political, technical and cultural work, acknowledging the work of

Perkmann and Spicer (2008), as well as Scott's (2014) discussion concerning the three institutional pillars as normative, regulatory and cultural/cognitive. These levels of findings and analysis offer a micro perspective, with institutional work offering a more micro-foundational perspective of institutional change (an organisational focus). In doing the above, this chapter serves to answer the main empirically driven research question which concerns the changes that occurred in the British internal energy market. The chapter will address (RQ1): what were the changes in the institutional logics and how were these enacted by key players within the market? 1(a): what were the changing institutional logics at the field level? And 1(b): how did organisations respond to changing logics at the field level?

As there still exists a quasi-monopoly presence within the British gas and electricity markets, through the manifestation of what the media have labelled the 'Big Six', the goal of this empirical chapter is not to explore how organisations, organisational fields and industries are structured isomorphically as a response to a 'dominant logic' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Lounsbury, 2007). But rather, this chapter seeks to trace back and reconstruct (Coraiola, Foster and Suddaby, 2015) the changing institutional logics in the exchange-field of energy and the responses of key organisations to multiple field level logics which emerge during a period of structural transformation. In this case the organisation is BG who acted as the 'test dummy' for organisationally implementing change geared toward privatisation at the exchange field level, to a more micro organisational level, and whose responses have served to shape the way in which the current energy market still runs (quite contradictorily) as a pseudo-competitive market. There will also be a focus upon the CEGB and the analysis of whether there exists any variation in the institutionalisation of the private market logic across the exchange field and within organisations.

The final part of this chapter will bring both the institutional logics and institutional work frameworks into relation to discuss their benefit, but also to identify their limitations in understanding institutional change. Ultimately, this empirical chapter addresses RQ1 and its sub-research questions, but it is also the first step in answering **(RQ3)** what are the connections and/or disconnections in the theoretical and empirical accounts of neo-institutional and cultural political economy frameworks?

### **5.1 Changing institutional logics and institutional work in the gas and electricity industry 1942-2007:**

Institutional logics shift because of an exogenous shock or crisis which brings the current logics of operation into question. Responding to a crisis (or an environmental jolt) typically signals the beginning of a search for a new paradigm of operation which supersedes the old way of thinking or operating in which the crisis occurred (Kuhn, 1970; Sine and David, 2003). Whilst the environmental jolt signifies the beginning of the search for change through de-legitimisations and alternatives, to identify and explain institutional change I need to explore the broader organisational field and the actors operating within this field (DiMaggio, 1991; Hoffman, 1999). Sine and David (2003) draw upon the work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) who argue that an industry is a collective of firms with outputs, buyers and suppliers. The field, on the other hand, is regarded as the space in which this industry operates, it is where the ‘competing firms, suppliers, buyers, regulators and policy makers’ have relationships and interact economically (Sine and David, 2003: 186).

Having determined the changing logics at the exchange field level as the shift from a national market logic to a private market logic, which thus extends to values pertaining to ownership, regulation and finances, I then need to identify the organisational responses to these changes. I will discuss the key organisations of British Gas (BG), Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) and regulatory bodies (e.g. OFGAS) in terms of their organisational responses to these changes as privatisation of nationalised industries were largely spearheaded and led by political parties and policy-makers; change was not instigated by the organisations themselves. My analysis of organisational responses and institutional work will begin in the sections relating to the period in question within this dissertation (from 1979).

Greenwood et al., (2010) explore the multiplicity of institutional logics and organisational responses and argue that economic behaviour is driven and shaped by the market logic; in my case this is the national to market logic which explores the market forces at play. Key to the discussion of changing institutional logics and the institutional work which ensued (whether it is in relation to changing the organising logics, or as an organisational response) is that logics at the field-level often came to be in competition with one another. I will demonstrate how various organisations responded differently to selected logics, and what this response actually entailed.

The following empirical sections are divided according to the key energy policy agenda. The empirical discussion is thus split to mirror the initial stages of the new conservative government, the proceeding privatisation of the gas market and British Gas, the privatisation of the electricity market and finally, the years that followed which encompasses the election of new Prime Ministers (John Major and

Tony Blair) and subsequent changing policy agendas. The focus of this dissertation is upon the privatisation processes and creation of competitive energy markets in gas and electricity from 1979-2007. However, my empirical discussion and analysis will begin three decades prior to the focal dates. I do this because key events and ‘environmental jolts’ are not autonomous or suspended in time and in order to understand why a date becomes significant to the discussion of change and critical junctures, I need to know what happened prior. This also speaks to the notion of the historical contingency of institutional logics wherein I can trace the emergence of institutional logics and also explicate the (de)legitimation strategies employed in institutionalising emerging institutional logics (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a). As such, my narrative will begin with post-war Britain and the prominence of the national market logic, from there I will chronologically trace key events which build to the presentation of the institutional narrative relevant to 1979-2007.

Finally, the institutional logics identified in this empirical sections are concurrent with those societal level logics identified by Friedland and Alford (1991) and Thornton *et al* (2008). The authors identify up to six societal level logics relating to the family, religion, the state, the market, professions and the corporation. Each of these societal level logics translate in varying forms at the exchange field level and thus the institutional norms, values and beliefs have varying effects upon multiple levels of society. Of particular focus in my empirical chapter are those societal level logics pertaining to the capitalist market, the bureaucratic state and the corporation with each manifesting in various forms at the exchange-field level (*see table 5*).

I will also provide analysis of the intentional institutional work (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006) performed by key organisation and collective members within

the exchange-field in the privatisation of the gas and electricity industries. More specifically, there will be a focus upon the political, technical and cultural work (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008) performed by the BG, CEGB, as well as the regulatory bodies of OFGAS and OFFER (later OFGEM). *Table 6* provides an overview for the types of work that will be analysed with consideration of levels of analysis, key actors and organisation as well as their relation to the regulative, normative and cultural institutional pillars. The following sections will help me to answer research question 1(a) what were the changing institutional logics at the field level? As mentioned in the previous chapter, a timeline of key events with a description of their significance has been produced and can be found in *table 7* (located in chapter conclusions). This timeline is relevant to both this chapter and the following empirical chapter and can act as a point of reference (if required) for the reader

Table 5 Societal level institutional logics and exchange field level logics

Societal level logic	Capitalist market			Bureaucratic state	Corporation
Institutional characteristics	Wealth accumulation and ownership	Wealth accumulation and ownership	Wealth accumulation and ownership	Regulation of the state through accountable bureaucracies	Market position of the firm
Exchange field level logic	Nationalised market logic	Privatised market logic	Public-private logic	Resource and sustainability logic	Managerial logic
Characteristics of logic	Public ownership, private ownership where profit is pertinent to the priority and achievement of national goals	Private ownership, competition, free market, commodification and capital accumulation for the achievement of national goals and development.	Private ownership and the creation of competition remains with an apparent social commitment for the achievement of national goals on an international scale	Regulation of energy resources to maintain and protect the state and provision to the consumer	Firms in the energy industry become more business-like Profit accumulation, increased concern with improving SHV

Societal level logic	Capitalist market			Bureaucratic state	Corporation
Level	Nationalised energy industry	Privatised energy industry	Privatised energy industry	Nationalised and privatised energy industry	Firm level
Actors involved	BG, CEGB Walker, Heseltine, Attlee, Heath	Parkinson, Ridley, Lawson, Thatcher, Major, Blair, Heseltine	Blair, Brown, BG, CEGB	The state, regulatory bodies	BG, CEGB
Strategy	Secure resources	Increase profit	Increase profit through taxation of utilities	Increase community good	Increase the size of the firm
Economic system	Nationalised market capitalism	Neoliberal market capitalism	New Labour market capitalism	Welfare capitalism	Managerial capitalism
Sources of heterogeneity	Neoliberal ideology, advocates of privatisation and free markets (political actors)	The consumer, trade unions, regulators, advocates of national strategy (political actors)	BG, CEGB, trade unions, political actors	Political actors, energy firms, international actors	The consumer, regulatory bodies, political actors



Table 6 Institutional work and related characteristics in the privatisation of gas and electricity

Institutional work	Characteristics	Concept from literature	Institutional pillar	Actors
Intentionality of work	Creation, maintenance and disruption of institutions	Actors are capable and central to institutional dynamics (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006)	Normative, Regulative, Cognitive	Members of the exchange field
Political work <i>Advocacy</i> <i>Vesting</i> <i>Defining</i>	Political support for practice	Generating social support by recruiting relevant actors and establishing rules and regulation Can influence regulation and the standardisation of practice (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008).	Regulative- Institutions as constraining and regularising behaviour, rule-setting and regulatory processes (Scott, 2014)	Government actors Ministerial bodies Dominant industry actors Trade Unions Consumer groups Energy organisations
Technical work <i>Theorisation</i> <i>Standardisation</i> <i>Mimicry</i> <i>Educating</i>	The entrenchment of practice and the elaboration of new models, processes and practice	Development of new models of practice and the legitimisation of these new models (through templates, procedures and tools) (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008).	Normative- ways of acting or behaving, values (desired way of doing) and norms (how things should be done). Defining	BG, CEGB, OFGAS-OFFER (OFGEM) Academics Industry professionals

Institutional work	Characteristics	Concept from literature	Institutional pillar	Actors
		<p>Turning proposed practice into an actual implementable programme of operation (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008).</p> <p>The alignment of new practice to common practice (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008).</p>	<p>goals, objectives and the appropriate way to achieve them.</p> <p>Gives rise to specific roles and duties (Scott, 2014)</p>	Think tanks
<p>Cultural work</p> <p><i>Constructing</i></p> <p><i>Normative networks</i></p> <p><i>Altering normative associations</i></p> <p><i>Identity construction</i></p>	Embedding practice within a wider system of values	<p>Framing new practices so that they appeal to a wider audience.</p> <p>Professionals play a role in institutionalising practice (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008)</p>	Cognitive- attributed meaning (Scott, 2014)	<p>BG, CEGB,</p> <p>Government actors</p> <p>Professionals</p>

## **5.2 Post-war Britain and the energy industry pre-privatisation 1942-1979:**

### **5.2.1 A strategy for the promotion of resources and recovery:**

Before the Conservative government came into power in 1979, the United Kingdom experienced two notable moments of flux in national and economic stability. The first being the recovery of the nation after the Second World War, and the second being two major shocks concerning international oil prices in 1973-4 and 1979 respectively (Pearson and Watson, 2012; Vincent, 2017). Both of these moments of crisis shone a spotlight on the UK energy industry and British energy consumption, which ultimately brought it to the forefront of government and policy-making priorities. By the end of the Second World War, the primary concern for the United Kingdom was that of recovery, but in the context of energy, there was an overriding concern with energy efficiency and more specifically, using energy efficiently (Vincent, 2017). The post-war situation saw the surplus of energy accumulated in the 1930s become increasingly deficient by the 1940s. Concerns during this period also extended beyond energy; societally, there was a general concern with the existing wartime austerity and a conditioned fear of returning to the economic depression that was experienced pre-war.

In the wake of the fear of economic depression the Beveridge Report was produced in 1942. The Report was drafted by William Beveridge, a liberal economist and was the initial inception of the welfare state; it offered social security and insurance to all citizens regardless of their income or status in society. The report outlined three guiding principles

‘The first principle...When the war is abolishing landmarks of every kind, is the opportunity for using experience in a clear field. A revolutionary moment in the world’s history is a time for revolutions, not for patching. The second principle is that organisation of social insurance should be treated as one part only of a comprehensive policy of social progress...The third principle is that social security must be achieved by co-operation between the State and the individual. The State should offer security for service and contribution’ (Beveridge, 1942: 6).

In the midst of a war, Beveridge’s outline for social security and welfare appealed to the British public. Churchill had ‘rallied the troops’ throughout the war and both the Conservative and Labour government held similar views regarding the future direction of Britain. To some extent there was agreement that the dominant operating logics of the country should focus upon social security and welfare (the national market logic). However there was a lack of trust in Churchill to bring to fruition Beveridge’s recommendations (Brown, 2001). The landscape of post-war politics was changing dramatically, critical change was on the horizon and this was cemented by the election of the Labour party and new Prime Minister, Clement Attlee in 1945 (Brown, 2001). The election of Labour signified the beginning of the implementation of the national market logic encompassing some of the principles raised by the Beveridge Report. Social insurance was addressed via the welfare state, and the comment regarding ‘the state should offer security for service’ (Beveridge, 1942: 6) was addressed through the ensuing nationalisation of industries.

The election of the Labour Party in 1945 triggered the beginning of the nationalisation process, here I start to see major industries which were key to the post-war economy transition into operating in the public sector. The 1945 Labour

Party Manifesto became a poignant document during this period of change wherein the Labour Party describe themselves as

‘A Socialist Party, and proud of it. Its ultimate purpose at home is the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain- free, democratic, efficient, progressive, public-spirited, its material resources organised in the service of the British people’ (Labour Party Election Manifesto, 1945: 314-316).

How then does this Socialist-forward ethos translate into the organisation and operation of fuel and power industries? In the 1945 Labour Manifesto, the new government argued that there were certain industries within the British economy that were more than ready for public ownership, whilst there were some smaller services and organisations which were serving the public well, and could carry on as they were.

For those industries which were not considered ready for public ownership (namely the bigger industries which are ubiquitous for society and the economy), the primary concern was to reduce

‘Prejudice to national interests by restrictive anti-social monopoly or cartel agreements- caring for their own capital structures and profits at the cost of a lower standard of living for all’ (Labour Party Election Manifesto, 332-334).

From this statement, it is clear that Labour’s ambition was to bring the nation together as ‘one nation’ and that society as an inter-institutional system with institutions at multiple levels should work towards the mission statement of national recovery (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008b). The manifesto outlined an industrial programme that sought to achieve this, and outlined points relating to industry generally as well as the fuel and power industries more specifically

‘Public ownership of the fuel and power industries. For a quarter of a century the coal industry, producing Britain’s most precious national raw material, has been floundering chaotically under the ownership of many hundreds of independent companies. Amalgamation under public ownership will bring great economies in operation and make it possible to modernise production methods and to raise safety standards in every colliery in the country. Public ownership of gas and electricity undertakings will lower charges, prevent competitive waste, open the way for co-ordinated research and development, and lead to the reforming of uneconomic areas of distribution. Other industries will benefit’ (Labour Party Election Manifesto, 1945: 341-348).

A point to take from Labour’s manifesto is that the concept of modernisation was crucial post-war recovery. Modernisation of the supply and organisation of the fuel and power industries was key to economic revival across the nation at all levels,

### **5.2.2 Exogenous shocks and the threat to the nationalised mind-set:**

The post-war period was a turbulent time in British history and British economic stability. Following the initial concerns regarding energy security and efficiency, and the subsequent nationalisation of internal energy market, another reason for the concern over energy security and supply eventually arose. In 1973-4, Europe was subjected to inflated oil prices because of the oil embargo by the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The oil crisis came as a direct result of tempestuous international politics; the producer’s cartel OPEC raised prices and eventually cut off oil supplies to Western countries as a form of retaliation against the West’s support of Israel in the war with Egypt and Syria (Wearing, 2013). The crisis not only served to highlight the importance of oil to the world economy, but also brought into focus the extent to which Britain relied upon

oil imports, and eventually it would bring to light the scarcity and fragility of Britain's energy resources.

The initial oil price rise in 1973 sparked a renewed government concern with energy efficiency, in the context of the oil crisis the concern was geared towards the availability of energy resources within the country and the effects this would have on the economy. In a cabinet meeting in 1973, these concerns were vocalised by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who concluded that

‘If demands for all sources of fuel remains at its present level- a very serious situation would arise in early February. There would be widespread electricity disconnections and some oil consumers would be without supplies for a period’ (Conservation of Fuel Supplies, 1973: 1).

In broader terms, the oil crisis had a significant effect on the economy; inflationary forces meant energy and commodity prices increased. This coupled with the international recession of the time meant Britain was experiencing a period of stagflation. Kenneth Baker (Minister from 1981 and member of the Cabinet from 1985) who was responsible for overseeing some of Thatcher's most significant policies shed further light on the oil crisis and the implications this had upon the internal energy market and also to the state of the British economy

‘The United States had a degree of oil self-sufficiency but Europe was not so fortunate. Moreover, as Britain had low stocks of coal we were soon plunged into an energy crisis. Tony Barber, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, increased interest rates to 13 per cent and called for special deposits from the clearing banks...A State of Emergency was declared in November, there were restrictions on the use of electricity, and by Christmas Peter Walker has issued petrol coupons. On 1 January 1974 a three-day working week was introduced across the country to preserve energy supplies’ (Baker, 1993: 37-38).

The oil crisis led to a group of Conservative actors seeking to take advantage of the deteriorating economic situation, it signalled the opportunity to legitimise new logics of operation and to instil alternative values and beliefs.

These new values emerged through the Ridley report was a report evaluating the nationalised industries in the UK. It was produced as a response to the oil crisis discussed in the previous section, and the demise of Edward Heath's government because of the coal strike 1973-1974. The report is key to the discussion of the beginning of the Conservative privatisation of 1979 as it was employed a foundational tool by which the necessity for change could be argued and implemented; the report was a significant 'catalyst for action' (Sine and David, 2003). From 1974, the Conservatives were drawing up plans which would see the defeat of the welfare style of running the economy, and one which would overcome public sector and nationalised industries. The report, which was controversially leaked to *The Economist* in 1978, was extensive and thorough in highlighting the motivations for the need for change, the language utilised in the report served to pit the public and the private sector against one another:

'There are fundamental differences between the private and public sector. In the private sector there is the fear of bankruptcy and redundancy- "the stick"; there is also the hope of the reward in the form of higher dividends, salaries or wages, as the results of success- "the carrot"... These "sticks" and "carrots" are weaker in the nationalised industries... There is a need to provide sticks, and carrots in the public sector. They are bound to be infinitely less effective than those in the private sector- because of the very nature of the public sector and its immunity from bankruptcy' (Economic Reconstruction Group, 1977: Part 1).



The report represents a ‘turn’ in thinking, and alongside its critique of the operation of nationalised industries, it also outlined ways in which public monopolies could be denationalised. Consisting of two parts, it extensively outlined nationalised industries consistently providing comparison to the way in which private sector industries could be, and perhaps ought to be operating. Interestingly, like preceding years, there was a concern to some extent with efficiency and supply. The report outlined

‘Another element of our policy should be to break up the monopolies, and to make each unit of public industry survive, and prosper, by means of providing a better service to the public than its competitor’ (Economic Reconstruction Group, 1977: Part 1).

This concern with industry as prosperous and providing a better service began to be reflected through suggestions pertaining to competition, financial and price control and general management, all of which (as will be outlined later within the chapter through the discussion of the privatisation of gas and electricity supply) became key values at the exchange field level.

### **5.3 Thatcher’s Conservative programme 1979-1990:**

Despite the environmental jolts prior to the election of the new government, the Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1979 did not explicitly or aggressively act upon the delegitimation of all nationalised industries outlined in the 1977 Ridley Report. Instead on a broader economic and social scale, Thatcher’s cabinet were more concerned with breaking up unions as well as wage suppression for the control of the high degrees of inflation in the British economy at the time (Seymour, 2012). More specifically relating to fuel and power, the initial manifesto outline of action was to some extent geared towards energy supplies and ensuring Britain became a prosperous country once again after the oil crisis. Some of the

sentiments of security and sufficient resources were not too dissimilar to those outlined by the Labour manifesto and the principles of the Beveridge Report discussed earlier within the chapter, this is particularly true where the policy for energy saving is discussed.

What is clear from the Conservative manifesto is that the discursive delegitimation towards the previous Labour government did not simply aim to discredit past policy makers, but also served to highlight that the decisions of previous policy makers had left the country in a precarious position. This precarity related to economic development and previous economic hardship. The manifesto argued that ‘even in the depression of the 1930s the British economy progressed more than it has under this Labour government’, comparisons were also made to other international economies after the oil crisis and surmised that even ‘with much poorer energy supplies than Britain, the others have nonetheless done better because they have not had a Labour government or suffered from Labour’s mistakes’ (Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1979).

### **5.3.1 Sowing the seeds-making the case for privatisation:**

The Conservative Party General Election Manifesto highlighted the efforts made by the Conservative government to ‘engage in problemistic search processes’ (Sine and David, 2003: 185). Where the Conservative Party Manifesto made more specific outlines relating to energy, reference was made to the private sector, but again it first and foremost sought to further discursively delegitimise the previous Labour government with a less forceful emphasis on a fully privatisation programme for energy:

‘The development of our energy resources provides a challenge for both our nationalised industries and the private sector. Nowhere has private enterprise been more successful in creating jobs and wealth for the nation than in bringing North Sea oil and gas ashore. These benefits will be short-lived unless we pursue a vigorous policy for energy saving. Labour’s interference has discouraged investment and could cost Britain billions of pounds in lost revenue. We shall undertake a complete review of all the activities of the British National Oil Corporation as soon as we take office. We shall ensure that our oil tax and licensing policies encourage new production’ (Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1979).

The 1979 manifesto pays little attention to what soon became known as privatisation, as stated above the main areas for review were that of British oil and the restoration of the two most recently nationalised major industries by the Labour government- British Aerospace and Cable & Wireless (British shipbuilding). These industries were of particular interest because they were operating profitably and the focus during the early were to raise revenues and reduce public-sector spending (Parker, 2004; Seymour, 2012). The manifesto similarly does not specifically make any proposals for the denationalisation of fuel and power services, instead the emphasis appeared to be on promoting greater efficiency in the public sector (Gamble, 2013). Whilst little explicit reference to privatisation is made in this manifesto, from Thatcher’s memoirs we can see that

‘Privatisation...Was fundamental to improving Britain’s economic performance...Just as nationalisation was at the heart of the collectivist programme by which Labour Governments sought to remodel British society, so privatisation is at the centre of any programme of reclaiming territory for freedom’ (Thatcher, 1993: 676).

Perhaps most notable about the early years of the Conservative government (up to 1981) was a clear attempt to garner support for the ensuing shift of nationalised

industries into the private sector as the new Conservative government promised ‘the fullest public participation in major new decisions’ (Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1979), but it has been noted that ‘the policy of privatisation developed only gradually after May 1979’ (Parker, 2015: 8). During the early years, the primary objective of the Conservative governments was to cut public spending in the midst of difficulties relating to the poor state of public finances, lobbying began to enable the identification of suitable assets to sell and Sir Geoffrey Howe (then Chancellor of the Exchequer) himself recognised in his own memoirs that it was not until target asset sales (amounting £1 billion) were announced, that the need to reduce public expenditures prompted ‘an early and non-doctrine shove to the privatisation process’ (Howe, 1981: 128). Even at this point however, the sale of assets was less steadfast upon the major nationalised industries and focused on smaller scale assets such as public sector land and government shares in BP (Parker, 2015).

It is not until 1980 that I begin to see some consideration of the sale of nationalised gas and electricity services. From 1979, there were two committees concerned with the decision making relating to the sale of assets, the Cabinet Ministerial Committee on Economic Affairs known as E Committee (later relabelled as E(A) Committee in 1983), and its ministerial Sub-Committee on Disposals known as E(DL). The role of the E(DL) was to deliberate the disposal of public sector assets in its entirety and to continuously monitor and review the operation, in May 1980 a paper was presented concerned state industries wherein those industries which had been agreed for privatisation bills and to be included in the 1980/81 legislative programme. The industries included were those aforementioned (British Aerospace and the National Freight Corporation) as well as British Airways. Most notable about

this paper is the list of possibilities for future sales of public assets, it is here that gas and electricity are first mentioned, but it remains clear that as industries they continued to be difficult to privatise and that there would be a need

‘To return as a later stage to the question of introducing some private capital into gas and electricity supply, possible in selected regions...At present we are unable to identify any workable options’ (E(DL), 1980).

The E(DL) recognised the public utilities as a highly valuable public service, it was also recognised that public utilities provided the nation with a vital service and had natural monopoly characteristic, but given the economic crisis of the early Thatcher government, the privatisation of the utilities would require an immense amount of state regulation and would prove to be too costly for a nation which was already struggling to balance its books (Parker, 2015).

Such statements as above make it clear that by 1980-81, privatisation of utilities still remained a contested and largely grey area. In early 1981, the then Financial Secretary Nigel Lawson in a memorandum to the E(DL) argued that in addition to the already agreed public industries which were on the 1980-1 list, other industries should also be identified and considered for transfer to the private sector, Lawson commented in this memorandum that

‘On a longer time scale, we ought to consider more radical structural changes in the industries if we are to take privatisation beyond the pool of obvious candidates we have so far identified’ (E(DL) 1981b).

By September 1981, in his new position of Secretary of State for Energy, Lawson argued that ‘no industry should remain under state ownership unless there is a positive and overwhelming case for it doing so’ (Parker, 2009: 82).

Nigel Lawson would prove to be one of the key architects of the Conservative's government privatisation strategy (Pearson and Watson, 2012). In a fundamental speech given to the British Institute for Economics Cambridge conference in 1982, Lawson outlined the foundational values that would enable the manifestation of the shift from national to market logic within the British internal energy market; Lawson stated:

'I do not see the government's task as being to try to plan the future shape of energy production and consumption. It is not even primarily to balance the UK demand and supply for energy. Our task is rather to set a framework which will ensure that the market operates in the energy sector with a minimum distortion and energy is produced and consumed efficiently' (Nigel Lawson, MP, 1982).

The speech given encompassed the neoliberal belief in decentralising the state and allowing market forces to operate. The sole purpose of the government at this stage was to provide a working framework from which these market forces could be allowed to operate. It became a tangible moment in changing field-level logics and it represented the beginning of a distinct shift in values from a national market logic to a private market logic. It is an instance by which the delegitimation of the Labour party seen in the early years of Conservative power, began to manifest more tangibly into policy.

A crucial element in identifying changing institutional logics becomes the generation and transmission of some form of common ground within exchange field and narratives relating to the socially constructed nature of logics (Loewenstein and Ocasio, 2003). How then did Nigel Lawson's speech do this? Well it brought into contention the omnipresence of natural monopoly organisations that existed within the British economy, particularly the publicly owned and ubiquitous British Gas

Corporation (BGC) wherein Lawson ‘changed the functions of the state, assailing most of the Department for Energy’s sacred cows’ (Pearson and Watson, 2012: 8). Essentially what began was an attack on the power of the natural monopoly organisations. Relating this to further institutional logics literature, in Friedland and Alford's (1991) terms, this attack on the power of organisations highlights the symbolic and material dimension of institutions and institutional logics, but what is also required to understand the change in logics are the normative dimensions of institutional logics (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a). In this instance the symbolic and material elements of shift from a national market to private market logic are presented in structural, practice and operational forms.

Off the back of this speech, the way in which culture begins to change institutional logics in a more normative sense was seen through a defining legislative moment for the Conservative government and particularly for Nigel Lawson in his time as Secretary of State for Energy (1981-1983) – the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Bill 1982. The initial draft of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Bill of 1982 called into question the values and beliefs of the bureaucratic state logic at the societal level

‘...We do not regard nationalisation as a suitable vehicle for industrial efficiency. During the passage of the Bill, we have been able to see the shortcomings of BNOC. We have not been able to examine the shortcomings of British Gas because, regrettably, monopoly confirms the old adage that all power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. So long as there is total monopoly—it has been going on for 25 years—it is difficult to tell whether there could be a more efficient way of dealing with the industry. That is what the Bill seeks to achieve’ (HC DEB 1 April 1982).

This initial draft of this legislative proposal was passed by houses of Parliament and became the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982. It was crucial for the

privatisation/liberalisation policy agenda and allowed for the provisions for the privatisation of the British National Oil Corporation (BNOC) and the eventual British Gas Corporation (BGC) (Webb, 1985). The act in a more general sense sought to

‘Make further provision with respect to the British National Oil Corporation; to abolish the National Oil Account; to make further respect to British Gas Corporation; to make provision for and in connection with the supply of gas through pipes by person other than the corporation’ (Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act, 1982).

Lawson’s policies and ideas were driven by a ‘new right’ way of thinking, learning heavily from Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek, the new frontier of energy policy was fundamentally based upon the notion of government failure, and the lack of efficiency and objectivity related to government intervention (Helm, 2003; Pearson and Watson, 2012). The Act is significant as it marks the first attempt to fully legitimise the private market logic in the provision of gas and impart the values and norms of this logic in terms of free market thinking and improved competition and efficiency into the industry through the reduction of monopoly powers.

In similar way in which the Oil and Gas Act 1982 removed restrictions and allowed for the foundational provisions of liberalisation, the Energy Act 1983 aimed to further mobilise upon Lawson’s narrative relating to the need for full privatisation and competition. Whilst the 1982 act was directly referred to the disposal of nationalised industries specifically related to oil, gas and petroleum, the Energy Act was actually the attempt to also liberalise electricity supply and generation. Legislation was created in an attempt to liberalise the electricity supply industry, which in true monopsony fashion was vertically integrated by nature, the Act in



effect ‘allowed private producers to sell to the Area Boards, who were responsible for serving the final consumers. It also permitted these producers access to the transmission and distribution system’ (Pearson and Watson, 2012: 8). In reality this Act actually had little effect on the way in which the electricity market was organised and did not result in an increase in private power generation.

Kay and Thompson (1986: 29), in their assessment of the Conservative government policy, argue that the rationale for privatisation is one that constantly changed, but after the failed attempt of liberalisation of the Energy Act 1983, the ‘primary objective has become the transfer of ownership’. Towards the end of 1983, the private market logic remains the dominant logic; however there remained antecedents of the national market logic, particularly in the structure of organisations within the exchange-field. Competition and contention exists between the two dominant logics, particularly where the norms and values of ownership are concerned. Through the consideration of the ownership characteristics of both the national and market logics and it is this ownership characteristic which becomes a key point of contention in legitimising the new market logic.

### **5.3.1.1 Institutional work and organisational responses in the initial attempts to implement privatisation 1979-1983:**

In this section I will identify and analyse the types of work which occurred during the initial years of setting the conservative privatisation programme in motion. My analysis will adhere to the categories of political, technical and cultural work (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008) and their according

regulative, normative and cognitive pillars (Scott, 2014). The strategy in the early years of the Conservative government was to build a case for privatisation; tactics were geared towards legitimising the shift to privatisation and the institutionalisation of the private market logic. Here I will analyse work performed by members of the exchange field and work carried out within focal organisations.

Work from 1979-1983 was predominantly political in nature. Political actors were not only needed to generate social support for the disruption of nationalised institutional structures within industry, but also needed to gain the support of BG and social support more generally. In 1981, Margaret Thatcher sought to recruit individuals whose politics and beliefs aligned with the new Conservative programme of privatisation and the need for competitive and efficient markets. Thatcher's first key recruitment brought Nigel Lawson to the position of the Secretary of State for Energy. Lawson was vested with this role as he was an advocate of competitive and regional models of operation and believed that the monopoly structures of nationalised industries should be broken up to allow for free-market models (Helm, 2003), but his ability to generate political support and establish rules and regulations were challenged throughout his time in this position.

A major obstacle for Lawson was that whilst the policy objectives of the Conservative government were clear in the desire to transfer ownership of industries from the government to the private sector; there existed limited evidence of planning and indeed, little evidence of the feasibility of such large-scale transformation being successful. What is more, nationalised industries were key to the post-war recovery of Britain as a result the denationalisation of such

industries was not well received by members within the exchange field and by wider society. Lawson (1992: 198) echoed this resentment in acknowledging ‘most of us felt denationalization did not sound positive enough’. Political work during this period was unfastidious, even when considering alternatives for the term denationalisation; David Howell (Lawson’s predecessor) officially described the process as privatisation and the term remained as no better alternatives could be provided. Lawson (1992: 198) even notes that “It is an ugly word and Margaret disliked it so much that for some time she refused to use it. But none of us could come up with anything better”. The Tory government had not engaged in pre-election preparations for privatisation and had equally not done so whilst they were the opposing party. In the early years, privatisation was simply an idea and this was reflected in the first party election manifesto (outlined earlier). Lawson acknowledged this

‘To all intents and purposes, it had never been done before. This is remarkably rare in Whitehall. Whenever a Minister has what he thinks is a new idea, the chances are that it is nothing of the sort’ (Lawson, 1992: 198).

Whilst there was a degree of intentionality in political work in the sense that there was consensus amongst the Conservatives that privatisation was the way forward, there was less professional expertise related to implementing such a large-scale and transformational programme.

In 1980, the regulatory body the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) produced a report concerning BGCs supply of domestic gas appliances. The report found that BGC held a monopoly position and ‘was highly critical of the Corporation’s conduct as a dominant buyer, and concluded that its retailing monopoly was against the public interest’ (George, Joll and Lynk, 1992:

368). Two key recommendations for future action were made: either BGC should completely withdraw from the retailing of gas appliances, or its restrictive actions on the market should be abandoned to reduce its power as a retailer (George, Joll and Lynk, 1992). The report is the first instance in which BGCs structure and dominance is called into question and concluded that

‘BGC’s domination of the market acts against the public interest. The Commission alleged that BGC is able to demand advantageous terms from suppliers, and to subsidise the sale of appliances from gas sales, thus inhibiting competition in retail trade; and that manufacturers’ close relationship with BGC has reduced the competitive pressure on them to increase efficiency’ (Joseph, 1981).

In the years following on from the fallout of the MMC report in 1980, the monopoly and management of BGC and the failure of the government to recruit relevant actors proved to be problematic for their endeavour to implement institutional change throughout the Conservative government’s initial years in power. Attempts at further political and technical work to break up BGCs organisational structure and introduce competition in the market are evident in Lawson’s creation of legislation (The Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act, 1982 and the Gas Act, 1983).

These acts were designed to establish new rules and regulations relating to the standardisation of practice within the gas and electricity industries. Lawson, through both these legislations began to implement the frame and discourse for the need for market forces could emerge within industry, this frame was very much based upon the overcoming the market failures identified by neoclassical economics, to achieve privatisation and eventual full competition which would

subsequently naturally diminish the regulatory role of the government. The Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act theorised a new model of practice to

‘An Act to make further provision with respect to British National Oil Corporation; to abolish the National Oil Account; to make further provision with respect to British Gas Corporation; to make provision for an in connection with the supply of gas through pipes by persons other than the Corporation’ (Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act., 1982: 1).

The Act targeted BGCs monopoly from two angles. The first part of the Act did so somewhat seemingly indirectly; the British National Oil Corporation’s (BNO) production activities were to be disposed of, new financial structures were to be put in place to make way for the creation of Britoil. Through political work, Lawson defined this move as necessary stating

‘First...No industrial corporation should be owned and controlled by the State unless there is a positive and specific reason for such an arrangement...Secondly, privatisation will be in the best interests of BNO itself. It has now been in existence for six years and has an oil-producing business with considerable expertise...It is rightly looking to expand. This calls for freedom to seize opportunities as and when they arise, for investment and for the spirit of enterprise. While the business remains in the State sector, its activities will inevitably be subject to the politicisation and to the constraints that that entails...Thirdly, we believe that the British people should have a much better opportunity to share directly in the country’s oil wealth. Symbolic ownership of BNO as a State corporation is in no sense a satisfactory substitute’ (HC DEB, 19 January 1982).

Through Lawson’s statement I can identify work occurring at the regulative, normative and cognitive level. There is evidence of Lawson’s delegitimation of the existing regulatory and institutional structures which seemingly serve to constrain the development of the oil industry. Whilst there is no specific

technical discussion regarding the way in which practice will be implemented, it is clear the Lawson and the Conservative government had a clear idea of the way in which they believed the industry should be run; in drawing upon the symbolic nature of nationalised organisations, Lawson calls into question who this nationalised industry is truly benefitting. This appearing as an attempt to construct a new organisational identity which would appeal to the masses rather than simply benefit the state.

The second part of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act more directly targeted BGCs supply monopoly

‘By law the gas corporation enjoys unfettered ownership of the onshore pipeline grid, exempt from the regulatory provisions of the Pipe-lines Act 1962, which apply to private sector pipelines. And, above all, it possesses an effective monopoly of both the purchase and the supply of gas in the United Kingdom.

As a result, producers of gas inevitably see little incentive to explore for and develop gas reserves, because they know that, at best, they will be faced with a take-it-or-leave-it price offer from the corporation, and that at worst they may get no offer. It is hardly surprising that, in sharp contrast to the position with offshore oil, exploration for gas is minimal, and we do not even have a clear picture of what our total gas reserves amount to. Meanwhile, many industrialists throughout the country are deprived of the gas that they would like to buy.

We have therefore decided to break the monopoly and open the industry up to the spur of competition. British Gas will still retain its statutory monopoly, but only within that market which it has a statutory obligation to supply on demand all consumers— they of course include the vast bulk of ordinary households’ (HC DEB, 19 January 1982).

The Act advocated the private market logic and established rules and regulations relating to free supply of gas and attempted to standardise practice so that other suppliers had the opportunity to enter the market and to also explore and develop new gas reserves (Helm, 2003). In practice, given that BGCs monopoly structure was not removed, new modes of practice which encouraged more liberal markets were not achieved; whilst others were able to build their own pipelines and had the opportunity to bypass BGCs systems, BGC was able to remain dominant in the industry and continue to adhere to the conditions by which it operated under the national market logic.

Further regulatory issues arose in that there was essentially, no, or at least a very limited regulatory framework. The regulatory role of the Secretary of State of Energy (Lawson) was redefined to some extent. Lawson was afforded more power in that in the first instance, negotiations concerning supply were to occur between organisations with Lawson only being consulted if agreements could not be made. The lack of regulation and the expertise of Lawson and his department relating to such technicalities of energy were questioned by other governmental actors, but Lawson remained adamant that this would not pose any future problems

‘There is considerable technical expertise in the Department. The particular technical expertise needed to fulfil that role and to process the appeals—I hope that in most cases agreement will be reached between the gas supplier and the gas corporation without the need to go to appeal, but there will be some that have to go to appeal, and there must be recourse to appeal—will require a small number of additional civil servants expert in this matter’ (HC DEB, 19 January 1982).

Despite the political work being undertaken to advocate the split up of BGCs structure, there was a lack of substantive political work with regards to defining legislation and there was no establishment of an independent regulator, the knowledge of the professionals Lawson claimed to have at his disposal was questionable as it was never outlined in detail; this was essentially liberalisation without regulation, a factor which led to the goals of the Act not being fully achieved.

The second piece of legislation (Energy Act 1983) was more ambitious than the first and sought to address entry conditions in the electricity industry and challenge the CEGBs monopoly. The scope of the Act was to increase competition in all parts of the electricity industry from generation, supply and transmission. The Act was the last to receive Royal Assent during Nigel Lawson's time as Secretary of State for Energy. It specifically opens with a clear declaration of intent to delegitimise previous Acts relating to electricity and to further the shift towards a private market logic within the industry; this shift is evident in the changes to

'Section 23 of the Electric Lighting Act 1909 (which prohibits persons other than the Electricity Boards from commencing to supply or distribute electricity) and section 11 of the Electricity (Supply) Act 1919 (which restricts the establishment and extension of generating stations) shall cease to have effect' (Energy Act, 1983).

The Act was threefold and particularly highlights political and technical work which occurred in the initial attempts to liberalise the electricity industry. Firstly it abolished monopolies dating back to 1909 which prohibited other persons (other than the Electricity Boards) to supply, distribute and generate electricity. This change occurred on very much a regulative sense and sought to change the



landscape of the industry. A notable normative change was that Area boards were required to be more transparent regarding tariffs

‘The tariffs fixed under section 7 or 8 above shall be so framed as to show the methods by which and the principles on which the charges are to be made as well as their amount, and shall be published in such a manner as in the opinion of the Electricity Board concerned will secure adequate publicity’ (Energy Act, 1983: 7).

This requirement meant that Area Boards were to ‘publish ‘private purchase tariffs’ (PPTs) at which they would purchase electricity from private producers, and, subject to technical feasibility, it required them to purchase power from private producers’ (Helm, 2003: 63). Finally, the Act made it a requirement for the industry to allow private producers to use the transmission and distributions systems of the industry so that electricity could be provided directly to the final consumer.

The Secretary of state for Energy is of key interest within this discussion of the individual agential influence upon institutional structures, throughout the Energy Act there is constant reference to ‘consent of the Secretary of State’ or matters or particulars needing to be ‘prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State’ (Energy Act, 1983) and in the context of this Act which was generally geared to unravelling the vertically integrated monopolies, much of the consent needed by the Secretary of State related to supply and regulation. More specifically related to the structure and regulation of the industry, it was legislated that the ‘Secretary of State may make such regulations as he thinks fit for the purpose of- (a) securing that supplies of electricity by Electricity Boards or other persons are regular and efficient’ (Energy Act, 1983).

If institutions are socially constructed and either enable or constrain, then said individual or organisation must interact appropriately with prevailing institutional logics in order to achieve their objectives, in this case we can see an individual actor working toward changing prevailing institutional norms, as well as socially reconstructing said institution in order to promote liberalisation within the industry (Sewell, 2005; Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca, 2011). However, the Act demonstrated that despite the failing of the liberalisation of supply of gas through the Oil and Gas Act as a result of lack of regulation, key actors did not appear to learn from mistakes and similar issues ensued within the regulation (or lack of) in the electricity industry; normative networks from the national market logic era remained relatively unchanged.

The Energy Act actually had little effect on the organisation and supply of electricity as it failed to actually encourage any new competition to enter into the industry (Hammond, Helm and Thomposon, 1986). BGC remained dominant as it was still able to set and control prices and entry conditions for entering the market; the private purchase tariffs remained uncertain and were based upon assumptive figures. The monopoly position of the CEGB meant that there existed disparity between the levels of capital between themselves and new entrants.

It also becomes significant as it ‘represented one of the last pieces of legislation that addressed the extent of competition rather than ownership in the Government’s privatisation programme’ (Hammond, Helm and Thomposon, 1986: 12). Whilst competition and the mobilisation of market forces always remained on the government’s agenda, it became increasingly clear that the natural monopoly structure of the industry which had become institutionalised from the days of

nationalisation would be difficult to break down, and the sole focus on encouraging new entrants into the industry would be limited if more drastic measures to change organisational structures were not taken.

In the early years of Thatcher's Conservative government, I see evidence of intentional institutional work across the regulative, normative and cognitive pillars of institutions. From 1979-1983, political work was crucial as the concept of privatisation was so new and underdeveloped technically and in legislation. Institutional actors such as Nigel Lawson were fundamental to the process, but in reality, not enough political work was done in the form of the recruitment of relevant actors to disrupt and create new institutional structures from within BGC. Technical work was lacking and as a result nationalised institutional structures were for the most part maintained by BG. Perkmann and Spicer (2008) argue that for institutional work to effectively induce institutional change, work must occur across the political, technical and cultural levels. What is more, professionals with sufficient expertise in relevant areas must also be recruited to institutionalise institutional change. Overall, from 1979-1983, the Conservative government, whilst they had disrupted one portion of BG's monopoly (the retailing arm), they had failed to fully disrupt and change the landscape of gas and electricity. Dominant players within the industries who advocated the national market logic had managed to maintain a relatively strong hold on institutional structures. Ultimately, the work that was carried out by the Conservative government during this period simply began to chip away at the foundations of monopoly structures; but the seeds of the private market philosophy were beginning to be sewn.

### **5.3.2 Privatising the gas industry- legitimising the private market logic:**

The primary goals of the years prior to 1983 were to establish a frame of operation by which the narrative associated with Nigel Lawson's 'new right' energy policy could be legitimised in legislation and operation. The initial attempts sought to ensure for the provisions for the liberalisations of markets and the attempt to break up vertically integrate monopolies operating in the industry to encourage competition.

In 1983, the Conservative party was re-elected and so their 'new right' privatisation programme could continue. The Conservative Party General Election Manifesto was clear in its objectives and outlined that there were only two viable options for the country at the time, either

'To continue our present steadfast progress towards recovery, or to follow policies more extreme and more damaging than those ever put forward by any previous Opposition' (Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1983).

Again, the narrative and frame for action were similar to those of the previous years of Conservative leadership; policy was geared towards the delegitimation of competing parties and the further delegitimation of the national market logic and a move toward a private market logic. The values, beliefs and norms were strengthened in the Conservative opinion regarding nationalised industries on the whole:

'But for all this, few people can now believe that state ownership means better service to the customer. The old illusions have melted away...A company which has to satisfy its customers and compete to survive is more

likely to be efficient, alert to innovation, and genuinely accountable to the public' (Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1983).

Whilst the manifesto continues to call into question the ill-perceived efficiency and longevity of the nationalised industries, it is also evidence of the rise to prominence of the private market logic value of consumerism. The consumerism characteristic is one which grows in importance alongside regulatory and ownership characteristics during the privatisation of the gas industry. The quote above more concretely refers to nationalised industries more generally as businesses, and specifically makes note of the consumer. This Hayekian line of thought relating to the private market logic and market principles influencing economic decision makers to promote socially efficiency and stability is one that is synonymous with financialisation literature (Storm, 2018), and as this section progresses I will demonstrate how the energy industry and BGC became increasingly financialised. With direct regard to The BGC, the manifesto made reference to its efforts to liberalise the gas and electricity markets, highlighting their success in abolishing legislation which promoted the Gas Corporation's monopoly of the supply of North Sea gas to the industry and also vowed to further endorse financialised values by drawing private capital into the gas and electricity industries respectively. Comments were also made regarding monopoly structures, it was noted that:

'Merely to replace state monopolies by private ones would be to waste an historic opportunity. So we will take steps to ensure that these new firms do not exploit their powerful positions to the detriment of consumers or their competitors. Those nationalised industries which cannot be privatised or organised as smaller and more efficient units will be given top-quality management and required to work to clear guidelines' (Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1983).

For all the importance placed upon the liberalisation of the gas and electricity industries during the years prior, the 1983 Conservative manifesto appeared to place much less emphasis on policies of liberalisation and the promotion of market forces, rather the concern appeared to lie with the issue of ownership and the power of embedded agency within nationalised organisations (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a).

Despite the lack of explicit discussion concerning the privatisation of the British Gas Corporation within the Conservative party manifesto, the Gas Act 1986 is a prominent example of the rapid implementation of legislation. The Act made the provisions for the privatisation of the BGC, and to establish a new framework of operation within the newly privatised gas industry, the functions of BGC became vested in British Gas plc (BG) and were offered for public sale by the end of 1986 (Simmonds, 2000). One of the most crucial points within this piece of legislation was the establishment of regulatory bodies. Regulation, in some capacity, has always been key to energy policy, even in the years which preceded the Conservative privatisation programme and I have demonstrated this matter in the earlier section relating to post-war Britain. Helm (2002: 182) highlights that ‘there have been two main types of institutions associated with energy policy: government departments and regulatory offices’. During the post-war period, it was the role of the Ministry of Fuel and Power to ensure that the output of coal reached its maximum to meet national domestic demand, During the 1950s and 60s, oil overtook coal in the industrial market, supply levels were high and also at a cheaper price, as a result there was less of a need for government involvement in energy policy. By the 1970s, the OPEC oil crisis discussed early began and the need for government policy arose once again and the Department of Energy was created. Bringing this back to the current period under discussion, the 1980s and 1990s saw a shift in focus of energy

policy as being geared more towards ‘maximising the efficiency of the existing assets’ wherein the dominant regulatory role became the responsibility of economic regulators and newly formed institutions at the field-level (Helm, 2002: 183), in the case of gas the economic regulator was OFGAS, and in the case of electricity it was OFFER.

The creation of these regulatory bodies is significant for the understanding of the private market logic in that they highlight the importance of the regulation characteristic relating to the supply and organisation of industry in the private market logic. They are also representative of the meta-theoretical concept of society as an interinstitutional system. These regulatory bodies whilst working at the field level, also have implications for societal and organisational sectors across levels and represent the various expectations that exist across these different sectors (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a). With expectations differing across these societal sectors, it was inevitable that sources of heterogeneity would arise as rationalities for action and behaviour differ, particularly as there are multiple and competing field-level logics already in play within the field.

Why then did regulation become so important during the privatisation of the gas industry? On the one hand, it is expected that regulation is to become crucial during the socially constructed transformation of institutional structures, this is most notable when the new right agendas of promoting competition, market forces and efficiency are considered. Upon reading the Act, it becomes clear when analysing the regulation in relation to Helm’s (2002) discussion of the variations of intensity of regulatory bodies, the shift in focus of regulation as being focused upon ensuring the security and abundance of energy supplies became more concerned with the

‘continuity of supply’ (Gas Act, 1986). Whilst these facets of the regulatory aspect remain significant in the case of privatising the British Gas Corporation, regulation also became imperative for reasons relating to the ownership. The Gas Act clearly stated that

‘The privilege with respect to the supply of gas through pipes conferred on the British Gas Corporation [...] shall cease to exist’ and that public gas suppliers had a duty to ‘develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of gas supply’ (Gas Act, 1986).

The language employed within this Act would suggest that allowances for the promotion of market forces and new market entrants were being made, however BG was ultimately sold as a vertically integrated industry (Simmonds, 2000).

The Gas Act and the subsequent privatisation and sale of the BGC allow for the discussion of the emergence of the financial values of the private market logic. Maintaining the monopoly institutional structure within the tariffed small market was non-accidental. The privatisation of British Gas as a monopoly was politically motivated in order to pass the first large-scale privatisation legislation through with seemingly minimal disruption, this would also ensure that future sales and share ownership would appear more attractive and to prospective investors (Pearson and Watson, 2012). This emphasis upon the sale of shares and promoting capital investment represent a distinct shift towards the financialisation of energy industries and the commodification of gas (and later electricity). Aitken (2013: 495) describes this form of financial capitalism one which aims to ‘convert economically inert activities into financial objects capable of generating financial wealth’. Whilst in this case the resource of gas was never considered as inert, in fact it was dubbed the



‘family silver’ (Macmillan, 1985). It was the nationalised framework of operation which was measured as inanimate.

It becomes increasingly clear that energy policy during this period was influenced by financial objectives. Most notably this can be seen in the transfer of corporations from the public to private sector, but it can also be seen where ownership is considered too. During this wave of liberalisation, the new right Conservative agenda which is characterised by the national to market logic encompassing the move towards free market thinking, deregulation and privatisation and this was heavily promoted via ‘the discourse of shareholder value’ (Ezzamel, Willmott and Worthington, 2008: 116). Part of the privatisation policy was to encourage and ‘broaden the participation of small investors in UK equity markets’ (Mayer and Meadowcroft, 1985:42). Indeed within the BG Privatisation proposal documents the sentiments of privatising BG as a monopoly to appear as a healthy organisation for prospective investors were echoed:

‘Debt creates growth for shareholders in excess of growth in operating profitability. If BG plc is marketed as an attractive company, investors will have significant regard to earnings growth as well as dividend yield’ (Rothschild & Sons Limited, 1985).

The concern was more related to general cash flows and capital accumulation and finding a balance in debt. Shares were not sold immediately however, it was deemed by the privatisation proposals that the government would retain a ‘golden share’ (Pezard, 1995) until they believed the time was suitable and more fruitful to sell. Once shares were offered for sale, they were sold across all levels of society allowing the British public, managers and employees alike to invest in British Gas and privatisation.

British Gas were beginning to see themselves as operating more like a business and it is here I begin to see the rise of the societal level corporate logic (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a). The emergence of the corporate logic was partly down to the structural legitimisation of the private market logic and promotion liberalisation and market forces, but also as a result of the financialisation of the BG. The privatisation process and all it encompassed gave British Gas the opportunity it wanted to achieve their ‘aspirations’, there was a desire to develop ‘international business activities’ and to gain the ability to enter foreign financial markets (Brierley, 1985). At the exchange field level, BG wanted to grow and adapt with its newly found privatised status and the initial privatisation processes signal the emergence of the managerial logic at the field level which sees firms being more concerned with market share and growing the size of the firm.

### **5.3.2.1 Institutional work and organisational responses in the privatisation of the gas industry and British Gas 1983-1986:**

This section will identify and analyse the types of work that occurred during the years where BG was privatised. My analysis will again adhere to the categories of political, technical and cultural work (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008) and their according regulative, normative and cognitive pillars (Scott, 2014). From 1983-1986 I find government objectives were translated into actionable policy with this period often being likened to the ‘big bang’. The relevant work was carried out by governmental actors, ministerial bodies and regulatory bodies were to aid by the shift from the national market logic to the private market logic. This is also a period where BG responded more forcefully to changing

logics at the exchange field-level. Where in the previous period I mainly found evidence of political and technical work, 1983-1986 is also characterised by cultural work and the embedding of practice in wider societal values.

The most notable and in fact, only piece of legislation during this period was the Gas Act 1986. This Act is indicative of both political and technical work and set out to disrupt and change institutions on a regulative and normative level. In the privatisation of BG the Director General of Gas Supply (DGGS) was appointed (Sir James McKinnon) and the Office of Gas Supply (OFGAS) was formed (Price, 1997). Alongside OFGAS, provisions were also made to form of the Gas Consumer Council (GCC), whose members possessed

‘Familiarity with the special requirements and circumstances of the different areas of Great Britain or of small businesses, are able together to represent the interests of consumers of gas supplied through pipes in all those areas and of such businesses’ (Gas Act, 1986).

These regulatory institutions were classed as non-ministerial bodies meaning they acted as ‘independent’ of the government, their primary duties and functions were to promote competition and regulate monopolies. These sentiments expressed in written legislation were more representative of the larger non-tariffed ‘contract sector’ (Pearson and Watson, 2012: 9) where entrants were being allowed to enter the market to supply customer who required more than 25,000 therms annually (DTI, 1997). Whilst problems with market structure did arise in the contract market not long after privatisation had occurred, issues related to selling BG as a private monopoly arose rather quickly in the more regulated tariff market which served the smaller customer (Danby, 1998). The regulatory approach imposed by the OFGAS was to enforce price capping in order to ‘mimic competition and encourage the new

private monopoly to become more efficient' (Pearson and Watson, 2012: 9). The way in which the market was arranged was not the norm, in fact it was described as 'novel' within privatisation information offered to British Gas.

#### BG technical work

During the initial years of the conservative government, cultural work and the framing of new practices so that they appealed to a wider audience were somewhat lacking. Cultural work was performed by multiple actors within the exchange field and was intended to promote values and beliefs concurrent with the private market logic and enhance the appeal of privatisation to a wider audience, beyond utility firms and other more industry specific actors. From 1983-1986, there is definite evidence of political and technical work aimed at changing institutions to implement the privatisation of the gas industry (predominately through the Gas Act); there is also significantly more evidence of the performance of cultural work, notably in the construction of new identities and the embedding of practice in a wider system of values.

Cultural work in the privatisation of BG is evident through the government's decision for the flotation of BG and the selling of shares and through the creation of the 'When you see Sid...Tell him!' campaign. The selling of shares was a significant moment for the Conservative government, it demonstrated their confidence in selling a nationalised industry as a whole rather than in stages and was an example of both a national and international privatisation offering (The Rothschild Archive, 2016). The 'Sid' campaign 'highlighted the populist appeal of privatisation' (Pollitt, 2004: 5), in October 1985 report on public opinion sampling surrounding BGC privatisation, it was noted that

‘Interest is the highest level recorded at any stage in flotation [...] Support for BGC privatisation is now up to 45% and opposition down to 25%. Historically the balance of opinion has been against BGC privatisation and as recently as end August opinion was balanced (37% in favour and 35% opposed)’ (Robson, 1986).

The cultural work surrounding the privatisation and flotation of BG appeared to be successful and further strengthen the creation of more financialised institutional structures and norms concurrent to the characteristics of the private market logic. As well as offering the public shareholdings, the government also made it possible for BG employees to buy shares and it was hoped

‘The shareholding would be widely taken up by employees and will be a long term investment. We consider that a widespread identification of employees with the business is good for employees and good for business’ (Brierley, 1985: 11).

So whilst discourse relating to shareholder value (SHV) was an important part of the cultural strategy for the creation of institutional structures that would be widely accepted outside of the organisation; it also represent the intentional cognitive work to change organisational culture to promote the more financialised and business-like model which has previously been outlined under technical work. The promotion of the discourse of SHV is important across several levels of analysis, it is useful for understanding the way in which privatisation is present across society as an inter-institutional system, and it also draw light upon the material and cultural foundations of institutions (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a).

The ‘Sid’ campaign is very much indicative of the political and/or cultural work carried out by political actors, it is difficult to delineate between the categorisations of work given the levels they operate on. The campaign also

represents institutional work which very much changed the relationship between the consumer and the organisation

‘A large proportion of shareholders will be our customers; we must ensure that they are dealt with as shareholders with both courtesy and efficiency. The interaction between a customer relationship and a shareholder relationship is obvious and important’ (Brierley, 1985: 10).

However, when analysing the significance of the floatation of shares, I find that whilst the initiative appears to come from directly from the state, there is extant evidence that BG was not simply responsive to the state desires. Indeed, in earlier sections (5.3.1.1) I have demonstrated that BG suggested that the government should consider

‘The introduction of a shareholding in the integrated Corporation rather than risking the piecemeal break-up of an economic structure which has a proven record of success’ (British Gas, 1981: 3).

There is extensive internal documentation of BGs concern with floatation and the selling of shares. There is also an apparent inherent concern with the identity of the organisation; those at top-level management were conscious that BG was to become a financialised entity, something which would promote the managerial logic of operation, but also firmly legitimise them as a private sector company

‘There is no way that we can become a private sector company, quoted on the London Stock Exchange, without working through the City. If flotation is to be successful, there is a need to ensure that we carry financial institutions with us and indeed to ensure that the whole of the City is favourably disposed towards British Gas’ (Brierley, 1985).

Ultimately, this period saw BG floated as a vertically integrated organisation. The institutional work of the period failed to disrupt and change the organisational structure of the firm. Legislation did more to strengthen and maintain the institutional structures of the gas industry; this was largely down to those actors (e.g. Walker) who shared similar values and beliefs to those individuals integral to BG but also because the full disruption and privatisation of BG was considered to be

### **5.3.3 Privatising electricity and the re-institutionalisation of the private market logic:**

By 1989, it was becoming clearer that the early attempts to privatise the energy market were perhaps not as successful as initially anticipated. The shift from a national market to a private market logic was not yet legitimised at the exchange field level, particularly where various values of ownership, regulation and finance were in contention with one another and across different level of society (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a). The fact that a private monopoly structure remained in the gas industry was something that received widespread criticism, despite this, the newly elected Conservative government hailed

‘The success of gas privatisation, with the benefits it brought to employees and millions of consumers, we will bring forward proposals for privatising the electricity industry subject to proper regulation’ (Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1987).

This latter point concerning ‘proper regulation’ became crucial and seemingly changed the way in which privatisation was approached in the electricity industry. It

is here I begin to see BG as a ‘test dummy’ for such large-scale transformation and implementation and legitimisation of the private market logic.

Pre-privatisation, the structure of the electricity industry remained as it was outlined by the Electricity Act of 1957. The electricity industry was characterised by the vertical integration of generation, transmission, distribution and supply, similar in structure to the pre-privatisation gas industry (Domah and Pollitt, 2001; Simmonds, 2002). The nationalised industry was dominated by the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB), who were responsible for the majority of generation and transmission and sold electricity in bulk to twelve area distribution boards (Simmonds, 2002). The twelve area distribution boards were responsible for regional distribution and were also characterised by a monopoly structure (Newbery and Pollitt, 1997). The 1957 Act actually introduced a degree of decentralisation within the industry and as a result, the CEGB and the Electricity Council replaced the original Central Electricity Authority (CEA) (Simmonds, 2002).

Privatising the electricity industry was to present some problems and would fundamentally challenge some of the characteristics relating to efficiency and competition of the private market logic. It was never doubted that electricity would be privatised and it was known among members of the exchange field that it would prove to be a large-scale structural operation, as was the case with the privatisation of gas; but there were fundamentally different issues to be considered with electricity. Three problems emerged in the privatisation of the electricity industry in that the scale of the industry was unlike any which had been previously privatised. To put the scale into perspective (Helm, 2003: 125) highlights that



‘British Gas had been valued at around £8 billion, the current-cost assets of the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) were around £32 billion in the public accounts’.

Aside from the financial elements, there was also a nuclear component to electricity and there were also similar concerns as in the privatisation of gas where there existed trepidations over whether the electricity industry could actually be made competitive and efficient without disrupting supply and technical efficiencies (Helm, 2003).

The Secretary of State for Energy at the time- Cecil Parkinson- stated that two key features of the previous electricity industry structure would remain within the privatised structure, firstly ‘the regional nature of the Area Boards, responsible for the distribution of electricity to the final customer’ it was argued that this would be beneficial for the consumer as there would be greater capacity to respond to

‘Local needs and prospects [...] it is important for both customers and employees that the companies responsible for distributing electricity should be concerned with particular areas and should develop a regional identity’ (Secretary of State for Energy, 1988: 3).

This point manifesting the bureaucratic state logic at the societal level in that the focus of electricity distribution should be for the provision of electricity with community good and social welfare in mind. In a more situated sense, this bureaucratic state logic translates to the resource and sustainability logic at the exchange field level where the focus is on ensuring comprehensive supplies to the consumer. Another feature of the nationalised industry to remain would be the NGC Company (NGC). Whilst elements of the bureaucratic state logics remained with a focus upon resources, what did persist was the delegitimation of a nationalised logic of operation. Within the document, government intervention was described as a

weakness and an inference to the running of an efficient industry and it was argued that under a nationalised framework, ‘the management of industry does not have freedom to manage in the same way as the private sector’ (Secretary of State for Energy, 1988: 5). There was an apparent continuation of the concern with ownership as the subset for the privatisation of the electricity industry, but again, I see evidence of the prevalence of the managerial logic where there was a push by those actors legitimising change for organisations to operate in a more business-like manner and to encompass the values, norms and beliefs pertaining to consumerism and financialisation.

Whilst preparations were being made for the full privatisation of the electricity industry, the success of the privatisation of BG and the gas industry were being called into question once again. Focus was brought back upon BG more so because of a high volume of complaints from consumers concerning pricing and supply strategies. The DDGS James McKinnon reported BG to the government appointed investigative body –the MMC- only two years after privatisation legislation had been put in place. The MMC report subsequently produced in 1988 was critical

**‘8.99** We have concluded that a monopoly situation exists in favour of British Gas plc by virtue of section 6(1)(a) of the Fair Trading Act 1973, in relation to the supply in Great Britain of gas through pipes to persons other than tariff customers within the meaning of Part I of the Gas Act 1986. We have also concluded:

**(a)** that BG's extensive discrimination in the prices of firm gas, and its refusal to supply interruptible gas to most current users of firm gas are steps being taken for the purpose of exploiting that monopoly situation;

(b) that the following actions or omissions on the part of BG are attributable to the existence of the monopoly situation; its extensive discrimination in its prices of firm gas; its refusal to supply interruptible gas to premium users; its imposition of particular contract terms; and its failure to provide adequate information on the charges to be made for common carriage' (MMC, 1998: *Gas*, Cm 500).

The report not only critiqued the structural implementation of the private market logic, but also indicated that the lack of competition and persistent monopoly structure of BG had effects differing effects across various levels of society.

From the bureaucratic state perspective, the resource and sustainability logic of operation is being challenged in that gas supply was not being adequately supplied to the consumer and counteracted the notion of privatisation for the increase and benefit of community good. The managerial logic of practice and its effects upon the consumer were also further critiqued in parliamentary debates wherein it was concluded that there existed

'Extensive discrimination by British Gas in the pricing and supply of gas to contract customer. They concluded that this practice operated against the public interest' (HL Deb 19 October 1988).

'Discrimination imposed higher costs on consumers less well placed to use alternative fuels, or obtain them on favourable terms, thus placing an arbitrary cost disadvantage on these customer. In addition, BG's policy of relating prices to those of the alternative available to each customer placed it in a position to undercut potential gas suppliers, which may be expected to deter new entrants and inhibit the development of competition in the market' (HL Deb 19 October 1988).

The essence of the private market logic based upon values, beliefs and norms pertaining to competition, free markets and efficiency were counter-acted by the corporation logic at the societal level and the structures the private market logic had

created and institutionalised. Fundamentally, what was created was a hierarchical market wherein BG occupied a cartel –like position. BG were found to be guilty of price discrimination in that lower prices were offered to consumers who could switch to substitute fuel more easily than those with limited abilities to do so (Ofgas, 1989; Yarrow, 1998). What I actually begin to see here is pricing practice, which is reminiscent of the ‘Big Six’ in the present market, issues that are still being investigated and mitigated against today. The historical contingency of this is that effects of institutional logics in one period are similar to that of another period over three decades on (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a; Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012). The restructuring of the industry through the private market logic had actually further strengthened the monopoly conditions.

### **5.3.3.1 Institutional work and organisational responses in the privatisation of electricity industry and the CEGB 1986-1990:**

The period 1986-1990 was characterised by the most significant amount of technical work in relation to the restructuring and privatisation of the electricity industry and the CEGB. This is largely as a result of the failed attempts a full liberalisation of BG (beyond the floatation of shares) and represents a period of learning and to some degree, reflects the reflexive capabilities of actors in performing institutional work to incur institutional change (Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca, 2011). There is evidence of the theorisation and standardisation of practice (despite there being less recorded evidence of the privatisation of electricity). What remains consistent during this period are the issues and fallout of the privatisation of gas industry and the privatisation of BG.

The 1988 White Paper-Privatising Electricity- proposed to end the monopoly hold of the CEGB via two steps, the first would be to transfer part of the CEGBs ownership into a competing generating company, the new company would ‘own some 30% of the CEGB’s existing capacity, including a broad spread of coal, oil and gas turbine plant of various sizes and ages’ (Secretary of State for Energy, 1988: 6). It was argued that this measure would allow the new company to compete with the CEGB across all levels and would provide a degree of competition within the industry. The second step related more closely to the ownership of the NGC, wherein it was proposed that ‘control and ownership of the NGC will be transferred to the distribution companies’ (Secretary of State for Energy, 1988: 6). The reasoning for this was that the NGC held a central role in ensuring the system in the industry did not fail, it was further argued that if a generating company such as the CEGB owned the grid, then it would be responsible for the directing the use of major power stations, and this would inevitably lead to the CEGB determining its competitors access to power stations. Where the private market logic is concerned, the economic reasoning behind giving ownership of the NGC to the distribution companies was that it would promote the incentive to ‘seek the cheapest sources of supply and to promote competition among generators’ (Secretary of State for Energy, 1988: 7). Efficiency was to be promoted through market forces and financially through cost-effectiveness.

The 1988 White Paper ‘Privatising Electricity’ claimed the new privatised structure of the electricity market would ‘introduce competition and provide a framework in which more will develop’, in particular it claimed that there would be a ‘wide choice of generators’ (Secretary of State for Energy, 1988), and yet in the same document there was the recognition that full liberalisation would not be

achieved. Not only are there multiple field-level logics to which organisations could respond, but there also appear to be contradictions within the logics themselves, so in this sense, it is the idea of organisations responding to logics of their choosing is not too farfetched. The White Paper proposed the splitting the CEGB into two companies, but what was actually translated into a framework for action was a ‘scheme for the division of all its property, rights and liabilities between three or more companies nominated by the Secretary of State’ (Electricity Act, 1989: Part II). In practice, ownership was broken up into ‘3 generating companies and a transmission company: National Power, Powergen, Nuclear Electric and the NGC Company’ (Simmonds, 2002: 3). The plans for the twelve regional electricity companies (REC) remained, local distribution systems were transferred to into their ownership and they held the responsibility to supply electricity in their authorised areas, the RECs ownership of the NGC also passed with each ‘holding a stake proportionate to its size’ (Simmonds, 2002: 3).

A significant provision which came out of the 1988 White Paper was the establishment of an electricity pool which acted as a market mechanism to promote competition and liberalise entry into the electricity generation market (Newbery and Pollitt, 1997; Newbery, 1999). The electricity pool has been described as the ‘most interesting institutional change’ (Newbery, 1999:4) and was considered to be somewhat of an innovation during the privatisation of electricity as it was considered one of the first market mechanisms of its kind (Simmonds, 2002). The pool essentially acted as an electricity spot market and echoed the guiding principle of introducing competition into electricity market through the restructuring of the industry, it saw the introduction of competition into the generation and supply facets of electricity, and limited regulation to the transmission and distribution parts of the

market (Newbery, 1997). The notion of efficiency is significant for the discussion of the market logic, particularly in terms of regulation and financialisation, as this innovation changed the way in which the electricity market was organised and operated through the supply and demand capabilities of the spot market. What is of note is the way in which efficiency was achieved:

‘Each day generators bid their plant into the pool before 10 am and receive their dispatch orders and a set of half-hourly prices by 5 pm for the following day. The half-hourly System Marginal Price (SMP) is the cost of generation from the most expensive generation plant accepted, based on a forecast of demand and ignoring transmission constraints’ (Newbery, 1999: 4).

The architects of the pool had to design a market solution that ensured efficient scheduling and provide the correct incentives to ensure capacity at peak times were met. The pool needed to ensure

‘That prices would approximate the system marginal cost (for efficient despatch); availability payment should need to be sufficient to keep a reserve margin of plant; and prices would need to be high enough to tempt investors to build more plant in a timely fashion’ (Helm, 2003: 132).

When comparing this to the way in which the gas market and British Gas were privatised, the initial methods of the Conservative government appear more primitive. In reality, the pool was a success because of wider issues that existed in Britain at the time. Legitimising the private market logic through the pool was made possible because of the recession at the beginning of the 1980s, where the initial focus had been upon the translation of the capitalist market into profit accumulation and financial investment, the recession prompted almost a retreat back in thinking to the national logic where the focus fell upon security of supply and cost minimisation.

The reduction of the monopoly structures within the electricity industry was used as a point of legitimation by those market advocates to highlight that the previous monopoly structure was costly, inefficient and incurred large operating costs.

The Electricity Act 1989 legislatively facilitated the new structures that were put in place within the energy industry. The regulatory provisions outlined by the 1989 saw the eradication and disruption of the Electricity Council and the creation of new more independent system of regulation being put in its place. This new and independent regulatory body was headed by the Director General of Electricity Supply (DGES)- Stephen Littlechild- and supported by the Office of Electricity Regulation (Offer) (Simmonds, 2002). Regulation by 1990 mirrored that of regulation in the gas industry (Simmonds, 2002); there was to be one key regulator with a supporting office and it was argued that an independent regulatory body would be more ‘capable of providing the industry with a much clearer set of ground rules which avoids much of the confusion between commercial and political objectives associated with nationalisation’ (Robinson, 1992: 4).

Institutional work at the political and technical level appeared to be relatively successful in disrupting and changing institutions for the privatisation of electricity. In 1988 another MMC report was produced and was crucial as it exposed regulation as an afterthought in the initial stages of the privatisation of gas (Helm, 2003). The report made recommendations that pricing policies should be more transparent and that competition needed to be encouraged through the fair accommodation of competitors on the BG transmission and distribution systems (Ofgas, 1989; Simmonds and Bartle, 2004). There was emphasis upon changing institutional



structures to legitimise and cement the emerging private market logic, but in reality, regulatory frameworks actually remained light-handed and opaque (Helm, 2003).

When analysing what change actually occurred in the electricity market as a result of privatisation, it becomes clear (as with the gas market) that yes, the policy narrative was translated into a frame for operation (Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012). Despite the differences in the way in which the industries were liberalised respectively, regulatory provision remained similar. One again, there was one key regulator who oversaw proceedings and was responsible for competition and efficiency. Both BG and the CEGB, having previously been natural monopolies, retained their powers within the market and were able to out-price and out-supply new entrants.

#### **5.4 A new Conservative leader 1990-1997:**

Towards the end of the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher and her Conservative government policies and programmes were staunchly scrutinised. It was becoming evident that the private market logic was privileging only certain levels of society. The various institutional sectors that appeared to benefit from the implementation of the private market logic were those operating at the industry level and whilst the state bureaucratic logic in terms of resource and sustainability was prevailing, it had not been fully translated into consumer protection and/or competitive pricing. Heterogeneity in the effects of the institutionalisation of the private market logic arose across different levels of society and within the political level itself. This alongside the regulatory issues of BG identified by the MMC in 1988, coupled with other policy related issues at the more macro level (unrelated to energy policy)

served as a trigger for an environmental jolt in the form of the resignation of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister. In 1990, the Conservative party leadership remained with the election of John Major as Prime Minister. Despite the changing hands of Conservative leadership, privatisation of the electricity industry, which was set in motion in 1988, began in 1990 and was eventually completed in 1991. Despite the societal, economic and political issues occurring at the time of electricity privatisation, it was considered a relative success, particularly in comparison to the privatisation of gas.

Within the energy industry, the broader societal level capitalist market logic had manifested and been legitimised structurally through the private market logic at the exchange-field level and corporations were operating in a more business-like manner. The success of privatisation was assessed on a national scale but was also being measured on an international scale. Where international comparisons had initially emerged through the national market logic from 1945-79, this was in the sense of the speed of post-war economic recovery. In the 1990s this comparison was more in terms of the ability to compete industrially on an international scale. The Conservative election Manifesto in 1992 further legitimised the successes of the private market logics and resource and sustainability logics through the recognition of the developments Britain had made

‘Our energy policies have brought the consumer both lower prices and better service. We have privatised British Gas and the electricity industry in a way that has opened these markets to competition. These policies are now being seized upon in Europe as essential extension of the Single Market.

Domestic consumers are now protected by a price formula, and high standards of service are enforced by the independent regulators. For

instance, electricity disconnections for debt have fallen by 43 percent since the launch of privatisation' (Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1992).

Despite the perceived success of privatisation (no less because privatisation and restructuring of gas and electricity industries were translated in such a short space of time given the monumental scale of change), issues still persisted in that BG remained as a monopoly presence within the market. The Conservative government under John Major recognised this and vowed to

'Continue to encourage competition in energy markets. We will progressively reduce British Gas' monopoly of the retail gas market, to give smaller users the same rights as big firms' (Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1992).

Antecedents of the national market logic in the form of monopoly style industries and early instantiations of the private market logic, in the form of privatised monopoly structures remained well in to the 1990s. In 1991, BG was once again referred to a regulatory body for investigation, this time the firm was under critical review by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT).

#### **5.4.1 Institutional work and organisational responses in the continued attempts to privatise gas 1990-1997:**

The process of privatisation of electricity involved the flotation of the NGC, the CEGB (which was subsequently split into two firms in the form of National power and PowerGen) and two further Scottish Companies (Scottish power and Scottish Hydro-Electric) - as outlined in the White Paper in 1988. With regards to financial structures, price controls were set for the transmission and distribution business of

the NGC and RECs respectively, with the government retaining a golden share in the companies for several years (as was the case with the privatisation of BG).

The OFT made it their responsibility to assess whether BG had been compliant and effective in implementing the recommendations of the 1988 MMC report for the stimulation of competition. The review, whilst critical, also showed a degree of sympathy towards BG

‘97. The conclusion of this review of the contract gas market is that the remedies introduced following the 1988 MMC Report have been ineffective in encouraging self-sustaining competition to BG. Since BG has complied fully with the undertakings it gave, it follows that further remedies are required if competition is to develop more strongly’ (OFT, 1991).

With the primary focus of privatisation of industry to promote competition, it was clear that the ethos of the private market logic had not been translated into a coherent frame of action for which regulatory, ownership and market characteristics could be institutionalised. The consolidation of opening up markets to competition and the shift from the national to the private market logics was reflected in the identification of obstacles to the growth of competition in that there was a lack of available gas for competing suppliers as BG held a monopoly position in relation to supply, storage and distribution systems. The Director General of Fair Trading (DGFT) noted BG’s

‘Ability to cross-subsidise, to act in a predatory manner, and to set price levels in the interruptible market that the competition cannot match’ (OFT, 1991).

The OFT review identified key areas in which the private market logic could be further strengthened and legitimised and argued that BG should

‘-Release a significant portion of its contracted gas, and reintroduce a revised version of the 90/10 undertaking;

-agree an appropriate undertaking to relax its tariff monopoly; and

-establish a separate subsidiary to operate the gas transmission and storage system on a non-discriminatory basis at arm’s length from the rest of BG, and agree to Office of Gas Supply (OFGAS) regulation of its charges.’

(MMC, 1993)<sup>9</sup>.

The recommendations of the OFT were not relegated to BG; the review also implicated the government in the shortcomings in the shift to private market logic with a focus upon altering existing policies and institutional structures

‘2.27. The review also suggested consideration of Government action in other areas, namely:

-the development of policies to allow greater freedom in the international trade of gas;

-abolition of the tariff threshold;

-strengthening the powers of the Director; and

-modification of the planning procedures for new pipelines’ (MMC, 1993).

The OFT refrained from referring BG to further investigation by the MMC but made it clear that action was required from BG and was also perhaps required on

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<sup>9</sup> The 90/10 rule refers to the contracting of no more than 90% of any gas field. The rule was introduced for a two year period and was recommended to be applied to all gas offered to BG in the period concerned, rather than on a field-by-field basis (MMC, 1993).

a ministerial level too. Thus the government reacted in a regulatory manner to maintain the full commitment and shift to a private market logic.

The Citizen's Charter represents a moment of collaboration in implementing institutional change and institutionalisation of the private market logic. Collaboration brought together disparate actors who held different expectations and interests in the provision of public services (Reay and Hinings, 2009). Collaborative activities in the development of new structures and institutional norms involved altering markets so they were more transparent for all users, including consumers, (competing) organisations and government related actors.

The Citizen's Charter signalled a shift in legislation related to the institutionalisation of the private market logic, regulatory frameworks were altered to further alleviate the monopoly structures created by the initial legitimisations of the private market logic. To some degree the changing regulatory framework required various institutions to shed their old identities, norms and values to implement the private market logic, but with a more social focus (Hardy, Lawrence and Grant, 2005; Maguire and Hardy, 2005). Evidence of this shift can be seen in the legislation which subsequently emerged as a result critical juncture in thinking surrounding the provision of public services. The Competition and Service (Utilities) Act of 1992 committed to strengthening the powers of those regulatory bodies overseeing operations within the exchange field, committed to the facilitation of increasing levels of competition within the gas supply market and empowered the Secretary of State further to enable the reduction of monopoly organisational structure. The 1992 Act specifically

focused upon standards and levels of performance and made amendments to the original Gas Act of 1986. Notable about the 1992 Act is that it established regulatory bodies as key vehicles for the altering of institutional frameworks and the institutionalisation of the private market logic. Furthermore, legal frameworks were altered and statutory implications were placed upon gas suppliers who failed to comply with the standards and levels of performance

**‘33C Information with respect to levels of performance.**

...(3) A public gas supplier who without reasonable excuse fails to do anything required of him by subsection (2) above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale’  
(Competition and Service (Utilities) Act, 1992).

The increased power afforded to the Secretary of State as a result of the Act meant through regulation, the monopoly threshold of BG was reduced almost immediately. This, some six years on, finally appeared to open up the gas provision market to competition. However, this introduction of competition was for the most part relegated to the smaller industrial and commercial markets, whereas the domestic tariff market ‘remained the franchise monopoly of British Gas’ (Simmonds and Bartle, 2004: 4); The private market logic had only been partially institutionalised across only some levels of the exchange field.

The regulatory powers afforded by the Competition and Service (Utilities) Act, 1992 meant that OFGAS took a leading role in seeking institutional change. The vertically integrated structure of BG and its monopoly power over transportation and storage of gas were to be the primary points of concern.

Negotiations and consultation processes related to these matters endured in the first half of 1992 with much contestation between OFGAS and BG.

During the negotiations relating to ownership, structure and market share of BG, there is evidence of tension between the corporate logic and the bureaucratic state logic, this tension arising from between BG and regulatory bodies, as well as well as between regulators and other members of the exchange field connected with the shipment and transmission of gas. BG were required to submit a consultation document specifically focused upon transportation, storage and pricing policies

‘BG subsequently submitted to OFGAS a draft public consultation document on transportation policy. OFGAS made a limited number of comments on the document and told BG that it was not bound by the proposals in the document and that it reserved the right to produce a different set of proposals if it felt that was appropriate. OFGAS also told BG that the document contained inadequate information on how the proposed pricing methodology would work in practice in respect of BG's proposals for arrangements for a Network Code’ (MMC, 1993: 14).

From the above, the contradictory nature of the actions of the regulator is apparent. This is perhaps due to the conflicting nature of the tasks the regulator OFGAS is set to uphold in that on the one hand, they are to ensure characteristics of the bureaucratic state logic are upheld in the sense that community welfare in the provision of gas is achieved, and on the other hand, they almost appear to strengthen the corporate logic where the ambition of BG is maintain the presence and power of the firm within the field. What is clear is that the private market logic at the field level is not being institutionalised. The light-handed regulatory touch of the regulator and the subsequent strength of the managerial logic related to the power of the firm

‘The illustrative prices in the public consultation document were based on a 4.5 per cent rate of return (ROR). In July 1992 BG put to OFGAS detailed



arguments in favour of higher RORs. OFGAS's response in July 1992 indicated that it would compare BG's submission with its own view of the matter but that it did not intend entering into negotiations, since this was an issue best addressed by the MMC. OFGAS subsequently indicated that it did not believe the higher rates were acceptable for such a low-risk business. In June 1992 BG made proposals on the question of separation of its transportation and storage and supply businesses. OFGAS considered that the proposals contained insufficient detail of the changes that would be necessary to create meaningful separate accounting or 'Chinese walls' between the businesses' (MMC, 1993: 14).<sup>10</sup>

The apparent stubbornness of BG given their monopoly position, which had remained institutionalised since the mid-80s, left multiple members in the field frustrated at the lack of progression in increasing competition across all aspects of the supply, storage and distribution of gas. Other shippers in the market were concerned that the proposed timetables of transition were unrealistic and expressed doubts in BG given their proposed methodologies. Indeed, the institutional structures which had been put in place in the initial stages of legitimising the private market logic were increasingly becoming barriers to the full implementation of the logic

'OFGAS believed that many of the regulatory problems it would face in setting up the new regime were due to the transportation and storage business remaining not only as part of BG, but not even being established as a separate subsidiary company. OFGAS was also concerned that the new regime should be set up in such a way that there would be no possibility of costs and profits being shifted between the different businesses to frustrate competition and transparency and distort regulatory pricing mechanisms' (MMC, 1993: 15).

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<sup>10</sup> The Chinese wall referring to information barriers between businesses.

The predatory nature of BG's management was also becoming more apparent and OFGAS subsequently decided to report BG to the MMC once again

‘BG's management had consistently been to put the interests of the gas supply business first, to regard transportation as a residual function and to create as many financial, operational and contractual barriers as possible to the use of the pipeline and storage system by competitors. BG was committed only to the strict letter of the undertakings. Discharging these alone could not, in the opinion of OFGAS, result in fair and open access to transportation and storage. On a number of major issues OFGAS believed that BG had delayed bringing forward definitive proposals. And, according to OFGAS, there was every indication that it would not be able to reach an accommodation with BG to allow the necessary changes to BG's Authorisation to be made by agreement’ (MMC. 1993: 15).

The MMC report of 1993 focused specifically upon issues of storage and transportation, as well as endeavouring to reduce BG's power within the industry and its prevailing vertically integrated structure; the report suggested that competition could only be achieved in the long term if BG ‘divested its supply business from more natural monopolies like storage and transportation’ (Danby, 1998: 9).

BG maintained their hard-line position throughout the MMC inquiry, and to some extent their position had been legitimised through their apparent commitment to consider internal separation and increasing domestic competition (Young, 2001). BG had even convinced the DTI and government to some extent that a complete split of the organisation would not be beneficial for international competition. At the same time, new institutional actors were emerging in the

exchange field both within BG <sup>11</sup> and at the regulatory level<sup>12</sup>. The apparent failure of BG, OFGAS and the MMC in implementing a framework of operation conducive to institutionalising the competitive and efficient market characteristics of the private market logic at the field level was undercut by Michael Heseltine (Secretary of State for Trade and industry, President of the Board of Trade). In light of wider political and social issues relating to budgets and tax increases, Heseltine recognised that reducing domestic gas prices to consumers and increasing competition under the present structures would be difficult. As a result, Heseltine rejected the recommendations of the 1993 MMC report and put forward that the business of BG should be separated and BG was subsequently restructured into five units in 1994 with the implementation of competition to begin in 1996 and be completed by 1998. This decision supported by the new chairman of BG and the new director of OFGAS and further cemented in legislation by the Gas Act 1995.

The swift movement of Heseltine was very much driven by the imminent general election of 1997 and the need to achieve some form of result given that John Major's time in government was marred by a series of scandals relating to MPs. The urgency in establishing competition was defined politically as it was believed that eradicating any 'teething problems' was fundamental to the Conservative Party winning the general election, this latter point is fairly ironic given that competition in the gas industry had nearly a decade to thrive.

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<sup>11</sup> Cedric Brown would take over BG and Richard Giordano would take over as chairman of the company.

<sup>12</sup> Clare Spottiswoode would become the Director General of OFGAS, taking over from James McKinnon in 1993.

## **5.5 A New Labour government 1997-2007:**

### **5.5.1 The private market logic with a social commitment:**

Tony Blair was elected in 1997. Through Blair's leadership emerged a commitment to the private market logic, but with an added social focus. The emergent public-private logic at the exchange field level concentrated upon public service provision through improved partnerships between various agencies and government (this was a general theme across the provision of energy and also within other areas of industry). This perhaps in recognition to the failing relationships with regulatory bodies and unclear institutional structures implemented by the previous Conservative governments.

Labour's approach to government in 1997 was underpinned earlier through the revised Clause IV of the Party's Constitution in that

'A dynamic economy, serving the public interest, in which the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition are joined with the forces of partnership and cooperation...with a thriving private sector and high quality public service, where those undertakings essential to the common good are either owned by the public or accountable to them' (Labour Party, 1995).

The notion of partnership and the emergent public-private logic derived from the changing attitudes towards the business sector. Where previous Labour governments who advocated the national market logic believed the state had a distinct role to play in the shaping of the economy. Blair's government was of the belief that nothing could be achieved in government if there was a lack of active support from the business sector. What did remain similar to the beliefs of previous Conservative governments was the idea that the role of the government

was as the ‘architect’ whom created the appropriate frameworks by which the public-private logic could operate and become institutionalised.

The partnership strategy was further legitimised through a shift in thinking from shareholder value to the ‘stakeholder society’ (Blair, 1996: 291-321). This social emphasis represented the government’s belief that groups of society have a stake in public services under the public-private logic.

‘An independent and creative voluntary sector, committed to voluntary activity as an expression of citizenship, is central to our vision of a stakeholder society. We are committed to developing plans for a national citizens’ service programme, to tap the enthusiasm and commitment of the many young people who want to make voluntary contributions in service of their communities. The millennium should harness the imagination of all those people who have so much to offer for the benefit of the community’ (Labour Party Manifesto, 1997).

The term ‘stakeholder’ became prevalent in New Labour’s rhetoric and represented ‘something of a bridge, linking Labour’s desire to forge for itself a modern, electable, political vision with the needs and objectives of business’ (Falconer and McLaughlin, 2000: 123). The stakeholder vision was to encompass beliefs, values and norms centring on the notions of inclusivity and community which would be institutionalised through corporate governance and the partnership relations. The role of the government in the construction of these institutional structure was to

‘Ensure resources are tailored to each individual’s needs, and then be wilfully promiscuous in utilising public, private and voluntary sectors to deliver them as appropriate. The terms of the contract between citizen and state will be flexible, however, often meaning that the more individuals put into the bargain, the more they will get back in return...Stakeholding has

also been applied to the governance of organisations, especially companies. Inclusive forms of governance are recommended to balance the interests of various groups (such as shareholders, employees, and suppliers) who constitute the organisation. Overall, the debate which stakeholding has sparked on corporate governance has been useful. Progressive business ideas have been aired, contributing to a gathering of momentum for change’ (Kelly and Gamble, 1997: 38-39).

There was to be no one distinct structure or framework for the implication of the partnership strategy, rather this was to be flexible and achieved in whichever way best suited the public service in question. The language related to partnership was prevalent across a wide range of public sector services at many levels of society, whether this was national, local or regional. The language of partnership also permeated across institutions between public and private organisations and between service providers and the wider community. Blair’s government appeared to be very aware of the transformation change they were seeking to implement through the public-private logic of operation

‘The Government is re-inventing Britain. We want all Government services to be of the very highest quality, efficient, responsive and customer-focused. We are working with the private sector through competition to achieve this. What matters to the citizen, and therefore to the Government, is quality for the customer at the most reasonable cost to the taxpayer. If these are right, the distinctions between public and private are not so important. We want to encourage business to play a fuller role in providing public services. That is why we stress Public-Private Partnerships’ (Cabinet Office, 1998: 3).

Thus the *Modernising Government* agenda was launched in 1999, with the objective of improving government performance, the agenda sought to ensure that policy making was aligned across all levels and strategic, that those individuals who were utilising public service were of central focus and that

service provision by public services was of the highest quality and efficient (CM 4310, 1999). More specifically, the role of partnerships was to ensure

‘Distinctions between services delivered by the public and the private sector are breaking down in many areas, opening the way to new ideas, partnerships and opportunities for devising and delivering what the public wants’ (CM 4310, 1999: 9).

‘We build on the many strengths in the public sector to equip it with a culture of improvement, innovation and collaborative purpose’ (CM 4310, 1999: 10).

‘Some parts of the public serviced are as efficient, dynamic and effective as anything in the private sector. But others are not. There are numerous reasons for this, and...to help counter some of these difficulties, the Government is working in partnership-partnership with the new, devolved ways of the government, and partnership with local authorities, other organisations and other countries’ (CM 4310, 1999: 11).

The notion of partnership took centre-stage in the rhetoric of the New Labour government and also became legitimised in future policy and legislation. The legislation which ensued after the outlining of these beliefs and values very much competed with and sought to delegitimise the managerial logic which had prevailed under the previous Conservative government.

### **5.5.3 Institutional work and organisational responses under the public-private logic 1997-2010:**

Cultural work is evident during this period and unlike previous periods; members outside the exchange field performed cultural work. The media

launched a scathing campaign against actors within BG and the CEGC dubbing them as the 'Fat Cat' directors who were profiting greatly from the effects of the managerial logic. The windfall tax ultimately raised £5.2bn of which all the proceeds were reinvested into the Welfare to Work programme created by the New Labour government (Pearson and Watson, 2012). There was an apparent more social dimension to energy policy and this was further cemented by the introduction of Winter Fuel Payments to those individuals over 60 (Pearson and Watson, 2012). To some extent, the familial societal level logic is evoked here with an emphasis upon the prosperity and capitalism of the household (Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012).

In 1997, there was also a commitment to launch a Review of Energy Sources for Power Generation. The review occurred at a time where energy security seemed at its strongest and in fact, the UK had become an exporter of crude oil and domestic gas production had risen significantly (Pearson and Watson, 2012). The White paper produced again centred around social good and Peter Mandelson (Secretary of State for Trade and Industry) concluded

'I am convinced that competitive markets are the best way of stimulating efficiency in industry, of providing consumers with real choice and bringing down prices. They are the cornerstone of our approach to energy and power generation' (DTI, 1998).

The privatised aspect of the public-private logic persisted and the commitment to full liberalisation of gas and electricity industries continued in the New Labour era and there was a renewed commitment to political work to generate social support and to alter the way in which organisations behaved.



The review and the subsequent White Paper also resurfaced issues of security of supply and resources, particularly in relation to gas-fired power commenting that ‘it is necessary to put in place a stricter consents policy in order to protect diversity and security of supply’ (DTI, 1998: 12). The White Paper signified the government’s recognition that there was a need for further electricity market reform, despite the arrival of new entrants within the market given the structural reforms in the years preceding (Pearson and Watson, 2012). When Blair came to power, the regulatory models created during the initial privatisations were consistent across the utility sectors in that there existed an independent economic regulator with a supporting regulatory office. For electricity this was the DGEN and Ofgem and for gas, the DGGG and Ofgas. The rhetoric of the New Labour government with its values of reducing the predatory managerial logic of utility companies and increasing competition and improved public service for users was mirrored in the first major piece of energy legislation put forward by the government. In 2000, the Utilities Act provided a framework by which the current separate industry regulators could be merged in to one regulatory authority in the form of Ofgem

‘4AA.-(1) The principal objective of the Secretary of State and the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority...in carrying out their respective functions under this Part is to protect the interests of consumers in relation to gas conveyed through pipes, wherever appropriate by prompting effective competition between person engaged in, or in commercial activities connected with, the shipping, transportation or supply of gas so conveyed’ (Utilities Act, 2000: 6).

The Act not only made changes to the duties of the regulator, but also afforded these regulators with new powers and implemented changes to consumer

representation within the energy sector (Simmonds, 2002). The Competition of Act of 1998 which also came into force in 2000 further cemented the changes to institutional structures enforced by the Utilities Act, but also gave the regulatory authority further power in line with that of the Office of Fair trading. The Competition Act further delegitimised the institutional structures of the previous Conservative government as it provided the legislative framework by which the long serving MMC could be abolished and replaced by the Competition Commission (CC). The Social commitment of the public-private market logic was predominately institutionalised through the creation of regulatory structures which were conducive and more focused upon user welfare.

The energy policies listed above mark a significant shift in institutional logics in the energy sector and represent a fundamental moment of institutional change, in fact, by 1999, liberalisation of gas electricity was considered to be complete as consumers were recorded to have switched suppliers, by April 1999, approximately 20% of consumers had switched from BG (Pearson and Watson, 2012: 20). Energy policy after 2000 was more geared towards environmental issues and whilst security of supply and competition remained important factors; the millennium marked a shift I thinking towards climate change. In 2007, Gordon Brown (who was Shadow Chancellor during Blair's government) was elected as Prime Minister and in his short term, the focus upon energy echoes much of Blair's sentiments in the early 2000s, whilst impetus to improve and maintain competition persisted, there was an increased commitment to energy policies relating to climate change.

## 5.6 Chapter conclusions:

This chapter has presented empirical findings and analysis of the privatisation process which occurred in the British gas and electricity industries in Britain from 1942-2010. Concepts from the institutional logics literature has allowed me to analyse how institutional change occurred and what changed institutionally in terms of structure, operations and practice. To some extent I have been able to analyse who is important to institutional change through this analysis, but this does not typically go beyond identifying key individuals who are related to the structural and operational changes which occurred in the privatisation of British energy markets. This is akin to Scott's (2008) definition of agency as having some impact on the social world, whether that is in relation to rules, relations or resources. Whilst there is a political discussion, politics and political events are more so used a proxy to define time periods; political tensions or contestations namely serve as indicators of socially constructed patterns and political issues at a more macro-level (Zilber, 2013). Struggles and tension in the institutionalisation of institutional logics is apparent in the negotiation, conflict and coordination of issues relating to ownership and regulation (particularly of the gas industry and BG) and finance (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a).

The empirical analysis of logics in the privatisation of gas and electricity is overarching and pertains to structures, operations and frameworks and so I get a bird-eyes view of institutional change that enables for the identification of key institutions, structures and collective/individual actors. Missing is the consideration of the way in which logics are worked into everyday behaviour and in the experience of actors and whilst agency is apparent, it is on the level of actors as 'architects' of institutional structures who serve as vehicles of dissemination of institutional norms,

values and beliefs (or conversely, simply as respondents to these changing institutional norms, values and beliefs). What persists is the ‘paradox of embedded agency’ (Battilana, 2006) and it is for this reason, my analysis will now move on to focus upon the analysis of more agentic aspects of institutional change.

The institutional work approach opened up my analytical capabilities for the identification of political, technical and cultural work more specific to organisations which operate within the exchange-field. I have been able through a focus upon institutional work to move beyond the reactionary organisational responses identified through the logics discussion, to consider further the actual work which occurred on the ground (Zilber, 2013) during the shift towards privatisation and in the creation of seemingly competitive markets. Perkmann and Spicer (2008) argue that for institutionalisation to take effect, institutional work must occur at the regulative, normative and cultural pillars concurrently. I have found that in the case of privatising gas and electricity and in particular, in the privatisation of BG, that institutional work at all three levels were not working towards the same end goal. Indeed, at times, there was a degree of intentionality from organisational actors to maintain institutions that were not conducive to the creation of a competitive market.

At times, throughout the privatisation story, this maintenance of institutions was also made possible by the lack of translation of the private market logic into industry at the exchange field level and in the organisation. What is more, throughout my analysis I found it difficult to categorise of the types of work (political, technical and cultural) employed in the institutionalisation of new modes of practice. Perkmann and Spicer (2008) argue that institutional theorists typically only discuss one type of work within their analysis, but in a period which represents such a large

scale shift across many different levels of analysis, it becomes difficult to delineate the types of work which occurred. This is also largely down to the fact that much of the change (or attempts at change) were initiated by the government and political actors.

In applying a neo-institutional analytical approach, I have found some shortcomings remain in fully explaining and understanding the changes which occurred in the process of privatising and creating gas and electricity markets. The neo-institutional frameworks of analysis are conducive to explaining and understanding how institutional change occurred and what institutional change occurred, it is less reflexive in the consideration of who is important to institutional change (beyond identifying key actors) and why institutional change occurred (beyond identifying environmental jolts or exogenous shocks).

Following the presentation of the empirical findings and analysis relating to the neo-institutional frameworks of institutional logics and institutional work, I will now turn to an empirical analysis relating to the CPE theoretical concepts outlined in chapter 3 to present an extended institutional approach to explaining and understanding change. The next empirical chapter is of an illustrative nature and will carry forward the findings from this chapter to extend the institutional framework to address some of the conceptual limitations I have identified. The following chapter will more specifically empirically address RQ2 and its sub research questions. Finally, chapter 7 will take the form of a discussion where I synthesise both the neo-institutional frameworks and CPE concepts alongside analytical findings and insights to answer (RQ3) how can cultural political economy aid the extension of the institutional logics and institutional work frameworks?



Table 7 Overview of key events and their significance

Date	Key event	Significance
1942	The Beveridge Report	Produced by economist William Beveridge, beginning of the idea of the welfare state
1945	End of WWII	United Kingdom recovery process begins, strain on resources.
1945	Clement Attlee becomes Prime Minister	Labour Government, the welfare state and nationalisation to ensure post-war recovery and to end austerity.
1945-51	Nationalisation of industry	Central policy of Labour government from 1945.
1953	The National Industrial Fuel Efficiency Service	Created as a direct result of government intervention relating to the post-war fuel deficiency.
1970-74	Edward Heath becomes Prime Minister	Conservative party comes to power. His role as Prime Minister ended poorly as a result of the oils crises 1973-4. Advocated welfare state style provision and policies. Contentious relationship with Margaret Thatcher.
1973	The Monopolies and Mergers Commission	Was initially recognised as the Monopolies and Restrictive Practices Commission in 1949. Reconstituted as the Monopolies Commission, 1956 and eventually became the Monopolies and Mergers Commission under the Fair Trading Act, 1973.
1973-4	Oil price shock	OPEC oil embargo as a result of Arab-Israeli War, stagflation in the British economy, economic crisis and subsequent miners' strikes. The oil

Date	Key event	Significance
		crisis was an environmental jolt that signalled the beginning of change.
1974	The Department of Energy	Responsibility for energy production was transferred to this body as a response to the 1973 oil crisis.
1974	Centre for Policy Studies	A think tank set up by Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher to develop policies for free-markets.
1977	The Ridley Report/Plan	A report concerning nationalised industries in the UK, produced after the coal strike of 1973-74 brought Edward Heath's government down. Produced by Conservative Nicholas Ridley who was a member of the Selsdon Group (British free-market economics pressure group). Ridley believed economic freedom was a condition for political and social freedom. The report proposed actions for the next Conservative government to overcome strikes in nationalised industries.
1979	Margaret Thatcher becomes Prime Minister	Election of the next Conservative government which had a very different approach to the Conservative government of Heath. Economic policy which was heavily influenced by monetarist thinking e.g. Milton Friedman, the belief that trade unions weakened industrial prosperity and undermined democracy and economic performance. Privatisation policies have been dubbed 'a crucial ingredient of Thatcherism' (Seldon and Collings, 2013: 27).



Date	Key event	Significance
1979-1981	Keith Joseph appointed Secretary of State for Industry	Joseph was key to the conceptualisation of markets in Britain and was a close advisor to Thatcher.
1981-1983	Nigel Lawson becomes Secretary of State for Energy	Lawson oversaw the first two pieces of legislation concerning the liberalisation of gas and electricity markets. This signalled the initial attempts to liberalise energy industries.
1982	Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act	The first attempt to liberalise/privatise energy markets.
1983	The Energy Act	Amended the law surrounding electricity so that electricity could be supplied by persons other than the Electricity Boards, and to amend laws relating to nuclear installations (Energy Act 1983). Not entirely successful, the monopoly remains.
1983-1987	Peter Walker becomes Secretary of State for energy	Walker oversaw the quickest passing of legislation at the time, he became key to the privatisation of the gas industry and the sale of British Gas as a private monopoly.
1986	The Gas Act	Allowed for the appointment of the Director General of Gas Supply, and the establishment of the Gas Consumer's Council. Changes to the supply of gas through pipes and the rights and liabilities of British Gas (Gas Act, 1986).
1986	The gas industry privatised	The changes made in the Gas Act 1986 allowed for the privatisation of British Gas.
1986	British Gas float shares	'Tell Sid' advertising campaign, selling of shares of British Gas- The consumer and employees of

Date	Key event	Significance
		BG become shareholders. The interconnection of economic, political and societal levels.
1986	OFGAS created	Central regulatory framework established under the Gas Act 1986. Key responsibilities were to monitor British Gas and protect consumers.
1987-1989	Cecil Parkinson becomes Secretary of State for energy	The architect of electricity privatisation, but as a result of personal scandal never saw his project through
1989-1992	John Wakeham becomes Secretary of State for energy	Wakeham took over Parkinson's plans for the privatisation of electricity supply. Wakeham was the last individuals in the position of Secretary of State for energy which was abolished in 1992 and functions were transferred to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).
1988	MMC Report	DGGS referred BG to the MMC over monopoly structure concerns. This report found that British Gas' actions were anti-competitive due to monopoly structure.
1989	The Electricity Act	Allowed for the appointment of a Director General of Electricity Supply and consumer committee for the electricity supply industry (Electricity Act 1989).
1989	OFFER created	Non-ministerial government department established under the Electricity Act 1989. Responsibilities included protection of consumer interests, regulation of the security and supply of service, and to promote the efficient use of electricity.

Date	Key event	Significance
1990	NGC formed	Activities of Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) transferred to NGC Company plc.
1990	Privatisation of the electricity industry	Privatisation of the CEGB, assets of CEGB broken up into three new companies. Transition of ownership to private completed in 1991. Signifies the last act of privatisation under Thatcher government- not without its issues.
1990	Margaret Thatcher resigns as Prime Minister	Michael Heseltine challenged her leadership, she lost the support of close Cabinet Ministers. Backlash as a result of policies e.g. taxation.
1990	John Major becomes Prime Minister	Became Prime Minister after Thatcher reluctantly resigned. 'Back to Basics' campaign and a long leadership marked by issues and scandals.
1991	Office of Fair Trading Review (OFT)	DGGS referred BG again for monopoly structure and rising consumer complaints. The review found complaints to be true, but was sympathetic towards BG and made recommendations for organisational structural change, as well as wider regulatory change initiated by government.
1991-1992	Citizen's Charter White Paper	Represented a landmark shift into the perceptions of the way in which public services were delivered in the country. User interests were privileged.
1992	Competition and Services (Utilities) Act	Legislation designed to strengthen the powers of utility regulators. Covered issues concerning standards of performance in relation to consumers and competition, also introduced the consideration of disputes (i.e. billing disputes and customer complaints).

Date	Key event	Significance
1993	MMC Report	Called into question the structure of British Gas, and desired rapid introduction of competition into the gas market. The monopoly appeared to remain. Michael Heseltine undercuts the recommendations of the report.
1993	Influx of new personnel in the field (BG and OFGAS)	Cedric Brown would take over BG and Richard Giordano would take over as chairman of the company. Clare Spottiswoode would become the Director General of OFGAS, taking over from James McKinnon in 1993.
1994	British Gas restructured	Transco created for the transportation and storage of gas. The changes represented a dramatic and fundamental shift in organisational culture in the gas industry. The gas market endured a period of radical change.
1995	The Gas Act	Amends certain parts of the Gas Act 1986, mainly to allow the owners of certain gas processing facilities to make these available to other persons. (Gas Act 1995).
1997	Tony Blair becomes Prime Minister	New Labour becomes a terms that is synonymous with the period 1997-2010. The introduction of the controversial Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). The idea that it did not matter who owned services, as long as they were efficient and of good quality. The public sector and trade unions simply saw this as furthering privatisation policies.

Date	Key event	Significance
1997	Windfall Tax	<p>Windfall tax on privatised utilities to combat the large profit utilities were making. Windfall tax raised £5.2bn.</p> <p>Concurrent with media campaign against 'Fat Cat' directors of these utility companies</p>
1998	The Competition Act (Competition Commission)	<p>Concerns competition and the abuse of power within the market, comments on dominant market position (Competition Act, 1998). The Competition Commission replaced The Monopolies and Mergers Commission, created by the Competition Act of 1998</p>
2000	Utilities Act	<p>Reformed the institutional framework for regulation of the gas industry.</p> <p>OFGAS and OFFER merge to create OFGEM. Its primary duties are to protect the interests of consumers and to promote competition within gas and electricity markets.</p>
2002	Enterprise Act	<p>Implemented major changes to competition law in the United Kingdom. Focus upon identifying forms of anti-competitive behaviour and sought to deter ant-competitive practices.</p>
2007-2010	Gordon Brown becomes Prime Minister	<p>Brown's party policy initiatives were described as the manifesto for change. More focused upon the issues of climate change and under his reign the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) was created in 2008.</p>

## **Chapter 6: A Neoliberal Economic Imaginary; Extending the Institutional**

### **Approach**

The previous chapter provided an institutional empirical narrative and analysis of the emerging, changing and competing institutional logics during the privatisation of the gas and electricity industries. I found that national market at the exchange field level became symbolic to post-war recovery efforts and for some time remained the dominant logic. With the election of Thatcher, I began to see the emergence of the private market logic, but this logic failed to be immediately legitimised. Tensions remained between the national market logic and the private market logic during the early years of privatisation and even a decade on from the initial privatisation efforts; this was particularly the case for British Gas. Political and organisational actors mainly carried out institutional work during the privatisation process, each engaging in political, technical and cultural work. This work contributed to the fact that the national market logic remained dominant and I found that in certain critical periods, organisations did not respond passively to changing logics. What is more, work at all three levels was lacking at times which either contributed to the maintenance of the national market logic and the adoption of only certain characteristics of the private market logic.

The institutional frameworks have allowed me to identify and analyse the overarching logics that were present in the gas and electricity industries and guided the privatisation process. The frameworks have also allowed me to determine to some extent who was involved in institutional change, which institutions were changed, maintained or disrupted and how this occurred. I have been able to identify some evidence of tension and struggle in legitimising change, but this did not tend to go beyond the adherence of actors to competing logics. Whilst some political

discussion is present in the previous chapter, this mainly acted as a proxy by which I could trace the changes that occurred in the industry. Analysis of the state remained in conjunction with the state bureaucratic logic, which is concerned with stability, resources and community welfare. In this chapter, I will move beyond this discussion of the state to engage further with the political ideology at the macro level to examine its influence upon the micro and micro-foundational levels. I will also move beyond the chronological and uni-directional analysis of change, which was prevalent in the previous chapter.

Thus the goal of this empirical chapter is not to re-tell the story of privatisation, but to apply an alternative institutional lens through CPE and to answer **(RQ2)** what imaginaries are present during the privatisation of the British energy sector and which imaginary is hegemonic? And the sub-research questions 2(a) *how did this imaginary come into being?* 2(b) *how does an imaginary change and evolve?* And 2(c) *how can an imaginary be translated into policy and legislation?* In addressing these research questions, I will employ the concept of the imaginary and its generative mechanisms of variation, selection and retention in conjunction with Gramsci's notions of hegemony and intellectuals to provide an institutional analysis with a political focus. I will initially offer a periodisation based upon Jessop's (2015) periodisation of Thatcherism as an imaginary, with the aim of producing a more sector-specific periodisation of Thatcherism that is relevant to the gas and electricity industries. The imagery of the hegemonic battlefield will be prevalent within this chapter as I will empirically focus upon key events and their causality within each distinct period.

## **6.1 The concept of the imaginary:**

Throughout the previous chapter, I referred to Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherite government policies, as well as the policies of other Prime Ministers who were in power during the period under study (both pre- and post-Thatcher). In an institutional sense, politics and political ideology were utilised as a proxy (Zilber, 2013) to help guide the analysis of institutional change and to signify moments of change in values, beliefs and logics of operation and practice. What I found, particularly through the analysis of institutional work, is that it is difficult to delineate the political or macro level from the changes that occurred at a micro and micro-foundational level in the discussion of privatisation of the gas and electricity industries. For this reason, I turn to CPE and the concept of the imaginary to further theorise the political level and to better explicate and incorporate political ideology, political tensions and/or struggles and the interests of elites (whether this be those aligned to ideology or top-level managers) into the analysis of change. Given Margaret Thatcher and her government dominate the analysis of change from 1979-2007, I will outline Thatcherism as an imaginary. This is not to say that Thatcherism is the only imaginary present during the three decades under study, but for the most part, it remains the dominant imaginary, even after her resignation.

### **6.1.1 Thatcherism as imaginary:**

My analysis of Thatcherism as an imaginary draws upon extant work conducted, *inter alia*, in political economy. Here I will employ analyses offered by Jessop (2015); from Jessop I take a more general periodisation of Thatcherism,



which explicates the general neo-liberal shift associated with Thatcher's political regime and from Torres, I learn how neoliberalism can effect a specific sector (in this case, the education sector). Whilst Torres (2013) did not provide a periodisation, the author's work concerning neoliberalism and its effects on the education sector is somewhat indicative of the way in which I can tailor the sector specific effects of neoliberalism on the British energy industry. To make Jessop's periodisation meaningful to my research, I must tailor it to the policies and occurrences within the industry, within those specific periods. I will add to their discussion and provide a periodisation of neoliberalism, which is sector specific to the energy industry, and more pertinently, a periodisation of neoliberalism, which refers directly to the processes of privatising the gas and electricity industries and related focal organisations and institutional structures.

The question here is what is Thatcherism and how do I relate Thatcherism to the CPE concepts of the imaginary and hegemony. Thatcherism relates to the general neoliberal shift that occurred in the United Kingdom during the late twentieth century. Jessop's (2015) periodisation of Thatcherism reflects this in the sense that it views Thatcherism as a whole (in relation to the country and general political, economic and social affairs), and not specific to any particular sector (both societally and economically). The term Thatcherism began as *Kampfbegriff*, in that it was employed as a term to speak out against the politics and policies of Margaret Thatcher (Jessop, 2015). As a descriptive term, it has grown over time to become synonymous with iterations of neoliberalism with which we have become familiar. Within this dissertation, Thatcherism refers to 'the development and specificity of the emergent strategic line pursued by Thatcher and her various circles of political and ideological supporters' (Jessop *et al.*, 1988: 8). Adopting this perspective of an

emergent strategic line is useful for offering an extended institutional approach; the strategic line relates to the ideas of selecting objectives, patterns of actions which are tailored towards achieving these objectives and changing tactics and strategies where critical moments arise and impede the achievement of objectives (Jessop, 2015).

Analysing Thatcherism as an emergent strategic line, which is subject to refinement, encompasses the idea that politics of the time (and today) are often of a trial and error nature. This is something I have already captured to some extent in the previous chapter, particularly where the analysis of the focal organisation BG and the somewhat unsuccessful liberalisation of the gas industry are concerned.

The goal of incorporating the concept of the imaginary into an extended institutional approach is to provide a more processual and relational analysis of change in that a wider political ideology can be discussed in relation to multiple levels of analysis. In doing this, I can take into account how different strategies, tactics and practices emanating from the political and/or governmental level have varied and changed over time (Jessop, 2015) and thus, how these variations have been articulated at the field-level, but also within organisations. To go beyond how I have done this in the previous chapter, I will take into account the role of intellectuals (outlined in the next section), their professional backgrounds, and their ability to strategically and selectively utilise the tools available to them to produce and counteract hegemonic projects. I aim to illustrate how the broader level of neoliberal governance is prevalent in all levels of analysis when examining the processes of privatisation in the gas and electricity industries. As I have noted in chapter 4, Thatcher's politics is only one way in which I can present neoliberalism, but I do so because her politics became synonymous with what became known as the 'British model' of privatisation, 'she initiated the privatisation boom, which was

copied around the world' (Osborne, 2013). Jessop (2015: 17) exemplifies

Thatcherism as

'Politics and policies as part of a wider neoconservative and/or neo-liberal trends in the 1970s and 1980s and as just one (if exemplary) case of a neo-liberal regime shift. If so, as a distinctive British variant, Thatcherism attracted attention because Margaret Thatcher was the first...woman to become prime minister in Britain; had a domineering personality; won three successive election victories; and exploited more fully than most powers available to the premier in Britain's unique form of unwritten 'elected dictatorship' in a highly mediatized age.'

Thatcherism became a phenomenon in its own rite and the notion of mediatization identified by Jessop here is crucial. The media play a crucial role within this chapter, they not only document the policies, strategies and tactics associated with Thatcherism, but incrementally, also capture those opposing views to Thatcherism.

Through the public and accessible platform of the media, Thatcherism became synonymous with much more than an emergent strategic-line and style of government and politics. The term came to denote her style of leadership and campaigning, her personality and values, as well as her political and economic strategies (Jessop, 2015). It is interesting to see what Thatcherism actually meant to Thatcher herself. In a BBC interview with Sir Robin Day (journalist), Day posed this very question to Thatcher

**'Sir Robin Day:** You have stamped your image on Conservative party like no previous leader. We never heard of Macmillanism; Heathism; Churchillism. We hear of Thatcherism. What does it mean?

**Prime Minister:** [Sir Robin Day] Sir Robin, it is not a name that I created in the sense of calling it an ism. Let me tell you what it stands for. It stands for sound finance and Government running the affairs of the nation in a sound financial way. It stands for honest money—not inflation. It stands for living within your means. It stands for incentives because we know full well that the growth, the economic strength of the nation comes from the efforts of its people. Its people need incentives to work as hard as they possibly can. All that has produced economic growth.

It stands for something else. It stands for the wider and wider spread of ownership of property, of houses, of shares, of savings. It stands for being strong in defence—a reliable ally and a trusted friend. People call those things Thatcherism; they are, in fact, fundamental common sense and having faith in the enterprise and abilities of the people. It was my task to try to release those. They were always there; they have always been there in the British people, but they couldn't flourish under Socialism. They have now been released. That's all that Thatcherism is' (Thatcher, 1984).

Even when distancing herself from the term, Thatcherism is presented in an archetypal manner. There is a sense that Thatcherism as an imaginary is something that could emancipate Britain from the shackles of Labour governments, socialism and economic hardship. It is these type of sentiments which become crucial to the discussion of the emergent strategic line that Thatcherism offered and becomes important to the analysis of values, beliefs and norms and they type of work which ensued in an institutional sense.

### **6.1.1 Hegemony, the historical bloc and intellectuals:**

In chapter 3 I raised questions around neoliberalism and its promise of competitive and efficient markets which would benefit not only the economy, but

wider society too. A key question which arose was how an ideology which promised to deliver so much and then failed to do so, remained so dominant for such a long period of time, even after Margaret Thatcher resigned from office. Considering this query, I introduced the Gramscian concepts of hegemony, the historical bloc<sup>13</sup> and intellectuals (organic and traditional) to try to make sense of the apparent failures but incredulous robustness of neoliberalism.

Thus, within this chapter, I will empirically explore these Gramscian concepts in relation to the privatisation of the gas and electricity industries. In analysing hegemony and hegemonic imaginaries, I will identify the dominant groups within society and analyse their strategic capabilities to secure domination through practices via ‘overt or tacit consent’ (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 201). In presenting Thatcherism as the dominant imaginary, I will explore the Gramscian notion of organic ideology through the dominant political ideology related to the hegemonic class, in this case, the hegemonic class will be the government under analysis and their related political ideologies. I will examine how this ideology is diffused through civil society, social institutions and structures.<sup>14</sup> To relate the Gramscian discussion of intellectuals more directly to my own work, organic intellectuals within the context of my research are those agents with a Thatcherite agenda and who articulate

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<sup>13</sup> The historical bloc here forms the basis by which there exists consent to some form of social order which thus allows for the production and re-production of the hegemony and the hegemonic project of the dominant social class (Gramsci, 1971).

<sup>14</sup> Civil society refers to non-government and non-business groups. In my case, the unit of analysis is non-ministerial bodies, independent regulatory bodies, trade unions and professional associations who have the power to influence the actions of businesses and political actors.

Thatcherite ideas. The traditional intellectuals in my case are those experts and bureaucrats who do what they do because it is their task and also because they exist within the political realm. They think they are doing institutional work, but in Gramscian terms they are actually the ones who articulate the imaginary, and those who are producing and reproducing hegemony via discourses, rules, procedures and practices of the dominant economic imaginary of the time.

Where I discuss hegemonic battles towards achieving a hegemonic imaginary, I will incorporate the consideration of the generative mechanism of variation, selection and retention to assess how an imaginary comes into being and is legitimised. Here I will draw upon my earlier discussion of discursive institutionalism (chapter 3) as the phases of variation and selection (VSR) are typically discursive in nature, with the selection phase also incorporating some consideration of technicalities and the logistics of retaining an imaginary. Here it is worth noting that through VSR and in adoption a relational approach, I can identify moments through which organic intellectuals may emerge through the clarification of key roles and positions within the hegemonic project. This is something that is relevant to the analysis of actors within the privatisation of the gas and electricity industries who appear to traverse from being a traditional intellectual to becoming an organic intellectual.

## **6.2 Thatcherism as an imaginary in the privatisation of gas and electricity:**

Within this analysis chapter, I will be utilising Jessop's periodisation of Thatcherism as a point of reference in order to develop a more empirically relevant periodisation of the changes that occurred within the British energy sector. Jessop

(2015: 18) refers to his own periodisation of Thatcherism<sup>15</sup> as one that addresses ‘the consolidation of Thatcherism as a specific economic, political and social project oriented to producing and sustaining a neo-liberal regime shift’. He himself notes that other periodisations are identifiable and different phases and questions can be distinguished and posed, that are different to those which are posed within this periodisation of Thatcherism. For me, it is a useful starting point as it takes into account the more political and economic notions of CPE pertaining to crises of capitalism and markets and the ensuing regulation of capitalism and markets (Sum and Jessop, 2015). Jessop’ (2015) also allows for the opportunity of the analysis of efforts to secure hegemony and counter hegemonies, as well as for identifying intellectuals (organic and traditional) who were crucial to this process (Gramsci, 1971).

The following empirical sections are thus organised utilising Jessop’s periodisation as a proxy for my own. I will offer some general discussion of the specific periods identified of Thatcherism as an imaginary and then go on to relate this discussion to produce periods of my own, which are directly related to events taking place within the energy industry. The goal here is to utilise an existing periodisation to guide my own analysis to produce a sector-specific periodisation that traces the iterations of neoliberalism at a more macro level, but also takes into account the battles for achieving a hegemonic project within the energy industry.

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<sup>15</sup> Jessop’s periodisation of Thatcherism consists of seven phases of the neoliberal regime shift.

### 6.2.1 An economy in disarray:

Much like the first empirical section within the previous chapter, this section will briefly discuss the pre-history of Thatcherism. This will serve to contextualise the following sections, but also begin my analysis of battles for hegemony. Jessop (2015) identifies the first of seven phases of Thatcherism as *Thatcherism as a social movement, 1965-1979*. Jessop highlights that this phase of the periodisation is one that encompassed many events and trends ‘from which useful lessons would be drawn for the Thatcherite project’ (Jessop, 2015: 18). During this phase there were many conflicting ideologies at play; on the one hand Edward Heath’s One Nation Conservative programme, on the other, there was Harold Wilson’s Labour initiative to modernise Britain (Jessop, 2015). Thatcherism at this time was not so much a political ideology, but represented a social and political movement which sought to oppose the post-war era style recovery. Jessop (2015) highlights that it was a period where the Labour government had adjusted some policy so that it was more aligned to neoliberalism and saw the ‘Winter of discontent’ emerge as a result. The winter of discontent occurred in 1978-1979 and saw widespread strikes from those within the civil society; a battle arose between trade unions who were demanding larger pay rises and the Labour government who imposed pay caps and went against their social alliances to the unions with the hope of controlling inflation (O’Grady, 2019).

Where Jessop’s periodisation begins at 1965, in the previous chapter, I highlighted that discussions concerning energy and indeed, the debate surrounding nationalised industries and the way in which the government was running the country began well before this date. As has been established, the concern with the state of the British economy and the way in which the economy operated had been in contention since the post war period, initially, British society doubted Churchill’s ability to lead



the country and similar sentiments were eventually expressed with Attlee and Heath. Jessop (2015) argues that the ‘pre-history of Thatcherism can be traced to 1965-1979’. This is generally a true statement, but when looking specifically for references to energy policy and nationalised industries, the archives show that even during her early years as a postgraduate student, Thatcher was vocal about her opinions regarding the state of the economy and the perceived negative effects of nationalised industries on capital accumulation

‘Loss of public utility services frequently means serious loss of revenue. For instance, Erith in North Kent had a very flourishing electricity undertaking which contributed a total of £27,011 to the local exchequer. Since Nationalisation this contribution has ceased and the compensation here, as elsewhere, is notoriously inadequate. The loss to Erith equals a 1s. 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. rate, and the rates have now gone up by this amount plus 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. But for electricity nationalisation, the rate need only have increased by 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d’ (Thatcher, 1949).

So although it is not until the late 1970s that we begin to see Thatcher become more prominent as an organic intellectual. The ideologies she brought forward in what Jessop (2015) describes as a social and political movement were based upon many years of discontent with the post-war British economic model. Jessop (2015) recognises that even in its early inception, Thatcherism was always concerned with monetarism and from the excerpt above, it is clear that the obsession with financial prosperity was something which was ingrained in Thatcher’s own philosophies. Thatcher’s own economic thinking was driven by the work of intellectuals such as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek. Friedman, known for his distaste toward ‘naïve Keynesian theory’ and Hayek known for his advocacy of liberalisation. Indeed upon browsing the archives, Thatcher herself is quoted as saying ‘I am steeping myself in Hayek’ (Thatcher, 1974) and upon further inspection; there is an abundance of correspondence between Thatcher, her colleagues and Hayek. Hayek

as a traditional intellectual in the academic landscape became a crucial sounding board in the years preceding Thatcher's election and indeed was to play a crucial role in gaining the consensus of the masses in support Thatcher and her rise to power.

An organic intellectual who is key to this period and the development of the Thatcherite organic ideology is Keith Joseph. In 1974, following the initial strikes and the OPEC oil crisis, Thatcher and Joseph set up the Centre for Policy Studies. This think-tank was created to develop policies for the new right agenda and for the development of free-market Conservatism. Joseph drew upon the influences of Milton Friedman and became interested in the economic theory of monetarism. Despite Thatcher's interest in the work of Friedman, she admits that it was Joseph who persuaded her to pursue a monetarist policy agenda (Thatcher, 1995). The first publication produced by the think tank was entitled 'why Britain needs a social market economy', this publication was crucial as it is the first instance in which we see the inception of the idea of the market which became central to the new right neoliberal agenda and indeed served as the ideological foundation for the private market logic identified in chapter 5. The foreword by Joseph is telling of the course the hegemonic battle between civil society and political society would take

'In 1974, Mrs Thatcher and I founded the Centre for Policy Studies to compare our own experiences and those of our European neighbours- who have been doing rather better than we- and to survey the scope for replacing increasingly interventionist government by social market policies, and to seek to change the climate of opinion in order to gain acceptance for them...In my talks with large university audiences, I have been struck by the fact that the new generation knows little of the market economy and its potential...It rejects the drift towards the state socialism and centralisation that has been gathering pace through crisis after crisis for twenty years.

...The term *market* needs some explanation and qualification. We favour social market policies, in the sense of responsible policies which work with and through the market to achieve wider social aim' (Centre for Policy Studies; foreword by Sir Keith Joseph, 1975: 4).

The notion of the social market economy was built upon the literal translation of the German term 'soziale Marktwirtschaft', a term which emerged from the academic discussions of Müller-Armack and developed by Ludwig Erhard. It was the conceptualisation of a market economy which is socially responsible and throughout the publication, the onus is placed upon the consumer and consumer choice; the social market economy embodied the independent and entrepreneurial ethos Thatcherism as an imaginary sought to instil in civil society (Studies, 1975). The report by the think tank also set out to clarify what neoliberalism actually meant to Thatcher and her supporters

'Support for the market system does not imply advocacy of laissez-faire in the sense of wishing to outlaw the government from economic affairs. Historically the market economy is neither a right-wing nor left-wing concept. And it can in principle embrace all of the a multiplicity of forms of ownership- large private and public companies, state-owned corporations, one-man firms,, partnerships, producer and consumer cooperatives, and so on. Its principal characteristic is ubiquity of choice for consumer, employee and investor- which demands multiplicity of production units competing vigorously for consumers' approval, the employee's service, and the investor's savings. Experience has demonstrated conclusively that these conditions can be more assuredly satisfied the larger is the privately-owned and managed sector of industry and the greater are the numbers of competing firms within that sector' (Studies, 1975: 8).

The report draws upon the common misconceptions associated with neoliberalism<sup>16</sup> to clarify what they (and thus Thatcher) believe it is not and I begin to see the inception of Thatcherite organic ideology. This ideology, presented across all levels of society is a clear instance of the redefinition of a hegemonic structures and institutional forms. The report produced by the think tank served to re-articulate and re-politicise ideological elements into a new worldview.

Joseph was openly critical of government record and policy before and within this period and in a lecture entitled ‘monetarism is not enough’, Joseph provided a critique of the then economic ideology and further articulated the need for a re-imagined economy

‘The false antithesis between monetarists and some so-called Keynesians really hides the antithesis between those economists who believe that monetary policies should be used to tackle monetary problems on the one hand and those on the other hand who believe that monetary policies can master non-monetary problems – such as union obstruction, lack of skills, overmanning, housing rigidity, lack of confidence – and non-monetary policies – like control of wages, prices and dividends – can master the monetary problem of inflation. This is precisely the opposite of what is needed’ (Joseph, 1976).

‘Keynes was certainly not a Keynesian, and that he *was* a monetarist by any reasonable definition of the term. The essential difference between some of those who arrogate to themselves the term Keynesian and those against whom the epithet ‘monetarist’ is brandished in order to frighten us off, is that the so-called monetarist rejects wonder-cures’ (Joseph, 1976).

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<sup>16</sup> Similar to those identified earlier within the dissertation introduction.

Joseph and his work with the Centre for Policy Studies were to become crucial throughout the privatisation process across all industries in Britain. Indeed Joseph's thinking and influence upon Thatcher's choices make it a credible judgment to name him as the intellectual who initially conceptualised the notion of the capitalist market within Britain; his influence was to remain into the next phase of Thatcherism.

In employing Jessop's (2015) first phase of Thatcherism in relation to VSR, he highlights a key moment of variation within this phase as the 'Winter of Discontent'. Whilst this was a key event, which Thatcher could attach herself to rally social support and sediment her ideas of opposition towards post-war era Britain and Labour governments, when focusing specifically upon nationalised industries, it was the lesser of two key events. The previously discussed OPEC oil crisis and the subsequent production of the Ridley Plan, was a more significant moment of variation which ultimately led to Thatcher's rise to power.

In the previous chapter, I explored the Ridley Plan and argued that it represented a Thatcherite turn in thinking and signified the emergence of the private market logic. Section 5.2.2 outlined the way in which the oil crisis and the subsequent mass strikes which followed by trade unions within civil society marked the demise of Edward Heath's government. What this moment of variation allowed for was the discursive production of Thatcher's counter-hegemony to that of the preceding Labour government. The plan was produced by the Tories was thorough and drew up extensive plans from overcoming trade unions, to stockpiling resources. What is most significant about the plan is the confidential annex which was leaked to the Economist in 1978. The language

evoked in the annex appeared to draw the battle lines between the Tories, the labour party and civil society

‘There is no doubt at some time the enemies of the next Tory Government will try to destroy this policy. It is easier to predict the timing of this challenge than the exact area in which it will come...Our enemies will not be able to let the policy get too well established, or it will be harder for them to break it. It seems likely that we will face the challenge between 6 months and 10 months after the Election’ (Ridley Plan, 1977: 24).

The discourse of the confidential annex is very much reminiscent of discourse relating to battle and war tactics; the document is littered with language pertaining to ‘attacking’ industries which were deemed ‘vulnerable’, engaging in ‘battle’ and taking ‘every precaution possible to strengthen our defences’ (Ridley Plan, 1977). The Ridley plan is indicative of class struggle, it demonstrates contentions between political and civil society wherein the dominant hegemonic class threatened ‘cut off the supply of money to strikers, and make the Union finance them’ (Ridley Plan, 1977: 25). It is a clear moment of overt coercion and exercising of power.

What is more, agential selectivities are present in this moment of variation. Hayek who I discussed earlier as being a great influence upon Thatcher, actually supported her and in her efforts through the Ridley plan and in her ambition to become PM

‘There is bound to be division within the Conservative party as between the expediency of short term tactics and the desirable strategy, and with Mrs. Thatcher on the right side needing support...The chances of the party gaining a large majority would probably be considerably better if it avoided a direct clash with the trade union leaders. But I am also convinced that Mrs. Thatcher does not get a sort of mandate to deal with the fundamental issue

she would have no chance of successfully dealing with that issue and making the British economy viable again the conservative party would in office merely prove that it can be no better than the Labour party' (Hayek, 1977).

The initial social and political movement of Thatcherism sought to mobilise the organic ideology of the conservative government. It forced individuals within political and civil society to reflect upon the past actions of both Labour and Conservative governments and promote the new right ideology of associated with Thatcherism as the only way in which Britain could become prosperous. These efforts were to be coercive within the civil realm as the obstacle in Thatcher's way were the trade unions. These unions remained a key point of contention and symbol of all that was wrong with not only the welfare state, but also with nationalised industry. This period was characterised mostly by moments of variation, it is not until the next phase of the periodisation of Thatcherism that I begin to see selection of discourse relating to Thatcherism as an imaginary in a wider setting beyond Thatcher's inner circle.

### **6.2.2 Markets as medicine:**

The second phase of Thatcherism as identified by Jessop (2015) is the *consolidation efforts, 1979-1982*. This was a period characterised by 'factionalism and sectionalism' within the Conservative party (Jessop, 2015: 19). Conflict emerged between interests relating to the United Kingdom and international interests and the North/South divide grew ever more pervasive. These conflicts in ideology and interests were encapsulated in the Conservative party by the One Nation 'wets' and the Thatcherite 'dries', the former considered Thatcherism as an ideology which was removed from Conservatism (Hayton, 2016). Thatcher coined the usage of the term

‘wets’ and intended it to highlight the weak and feeble nature of senior members of government who were unwilling to compromise with trade unions, who expressed disdain for her monetarist policies and who were generally outside of her inner circle. The challenge for Thatcherism in this phase was to overcome the ‘wet’ Conservative policy and to instil ideas relating to individualism and to remove the dependency culture promoted by the welfare state, these ideas had to translate into the state apparatus and to secure both electoral and wider social support. Jessop (2015) highlights that the Thatcherite emergent strategic line took some time to emerge and develop; the initial stages of the emergent strategic line pertained mostly to ‘tight control over the money supply, public spending cuts, attacking trade union privileges and faith in the regenerative power of market forces’ (Jessop: 2015: 19). A fully hegemonic neoliberal project was not established in this period and it was a period which saw counter-hegemonies from the One Nation ‘wets’ echoed within civil society.

In the previous chapter (sections 5.3 and 5.3.1), I outlined this initial stage of Thatcherism as a period which served to make the case for privatisation. It was not a period where privatisation was an explicit policy, but it drew upon ideology of the social market economy and that liberalisation and markets were key to emancipating the British economy and making it prosperous once again, Thatcher also reflected upon the state of the economy in the post-election speech

‘...When we took over the Government on 4<sup>th</sup> May, we found a nation disillusioned and dispirited. That was, I believe the inevitable outcome the Labour Government’s socialist approach. Last Winter, there can have been few in Britain who did not feel, with mounting alarm, that our society was sick-morally, socially and economically’ (Thatcher, 1979).



Britain was likened to a 'sick patient' when Thatcher came to power and this idea of recovery from the illness caused by previous government decisions was to feature heavily in the strategies and tactics employed by Thatcher's new right government. At the energy industry level, the competing hegemonic projects are ever present within industrial economic policy and reflect a moment of variation in the way industry ought to be run. There were two key contributing moments of variation during this phase of Thatcherism. The first was prompted by the 1980 MMC report which criticised BGs domination of the market and the second by the attempt to remove limit BGs capacity to search for oil, as well as provide gas. The nationalised mode of operation was called into question by Thatcher and her supporters and what ensued was a period of discursive battle within and around the energy industry.

In attempting to break up the nationalised gas industry and the dominant position of BG, a battle between organic and traditional intellectuals emerged. Here, the organic intellectual is the aforementioned Nigel Lawson who as Secretary of State for Energy as appointed by Thatcher and was responsible for achieving consent for Thatcherism as hegemonic imaginary. The *seemingly* traditional intellectual in this battle for hegemony was Denis Rooke, Chairman of BG. Between 1981-1983, Rooke and Lawson engaged in war over the gas industry, Lawson wanting to break up Rooke's gas empire (Goodman, 2008) and privatise it as separate companies. Both these moments prompted the Conservative government to challenge the practices associated with nationalised industry; where variation calls for interpretations for re-stabilisation and renewed way of operation, it also requires for strategy to reinterpreted in a feasible and attractive manner. This latter point proves difficult for the Conservative government during this phase.

Lawson, in this battle with a figure as formidable as Rooke was aware that in order to successfully overthrow the dominance of BG within the industry he would have to strategically draw upon resources of an agential nature in order to influence the structure of the gas industry. In a letter to Thatcher, Lawson argues that in order to achieve hegemony recruitment of relevant agents with the correct skills and expertise would be necessary

‘I propose to build up business expertise at senior and middle management levels in a way which will directly strengthen the competence of the Department’s relevant dealings with the industries, win their confidence in this enhanced capacity and yet no undermine the allocation of clear responsibility for the totality of business, political and social considerations which characterise the relationship between nationalised industry and Government. I propose both to create a central source of financial and commercial expertise and to strengthen commercial attitudes and expertise within policy making’ (Lawson, 1981).

The suggestion to employ structural selectivities to make way for new agents with the capacity for change who would aid the retention of the hegemonic project came from the CPRS and Keith Joseph. Lawson was merely speaking of the interests of Joseph who had conceptualised the market, but the tactics which were suggested were necessary given the strong allegiance to Rooke and the nationalised industries, partially amongst individuals on the level of political society. Within political society, there is evidence that the hegemonic project of Thatcherism remained weak

‘The measure takes away from the British Gas Corporation its profitable oil interests. Also, it is another foray into the guerrilla war that the Secretary of State wages against the BGC, particularly against its able chairman, Sir Denis Rooke.

The Government dislike—the Under-Secretary of State seemed to admit it—all nationalised industries but reserve their greatest hatred for the successful ones, particularly those whose leaders dare to criticise the policies of the Government and the Secretary of State for Energy. If it were not for Sir Denis Rooke's great ability, administrative gifts and the loyalty that he excites in his staff, he would have long gone the way of Mr. Glyn England, former chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board.

A successful nationalised industry upsets the cherished doctrine of the Secretary of State, who is one of the most extreme free enterprisers in the Government, and of those who think like him ' (HC DEB, 26 October 1982).

The principles and beliefs of the social market economy and the benefits of markets were still points of contention. Thatcher's government had apparently failed to win over consensus within civil society. What is more, Denis Rooke, despite being considered here as a traditional intellectual, is more aligned to those organic intellectuals of ideology opposing Thatcherism. Tam Dalyell (Member of Parliament and friend of Rooke) recalls a conversation wherein in Rooke states

'I have many friends in the Lords, whom I respect greatly, and frankly their Select Committees on energy and science matters do a better job than yours in the House of Commons. But throughout my life, I have taken the view that either I do a job properly or not at all. To 'do the Lords properly' I believe that one has to be a regular attendee, week in and week out. My other interests simply do not permit anything approaching acceptable attendance' (Dalyell, 2008).

Rooke clearly blurs the boundaries between organic and traditional intellectuals and their association with the hegemonic class. What is more, he draws attention to the weakness of the Thatcherite strategy in recruiting individuals who could battle against those with expertise in the nationalised industry. This was a

relatively large factor in the weak adaptation of Thatcherism as a hegemonic imaginary within industry during this phase.

As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, from the moments of variation prompted by the MMC report and the endeavours to remove BGs capacities to search for oil came moments of selection and retention. Various actor responses emerged to this assessment of BGCs dominant position within the industry. The report provided the opportunity for political entrepreneurs (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008) to build upon the failings of the existing structure of BGC and to engineer new rules and regulations related to practice. The processes by which new institutional structures could be achieved varied somewhat

‘ (i) The Minister of State, Department of Trade propose that BGC should be required to withdraw from the gas retailing over five years...The Corporation should dispose of half of its showrooms within two years, a quarter in the following year, and the remaining quarter in the final two years.

(ii)The Secretary of State for Energy proposes that BGC should hive off the retail sale of gas appliances into a separate subsidiary. The Corporation itself would continue to buy gas appliances wholesale, but would sell them to reputable private retailers and its own subsidiary on the same terms. The retailing subsidiary could be sold to the private sector as and when it developed into a viable business.

(iii)The Parliamentary Secretary, Department of Industry, proposes a modification of the Minister of State, Trade’s scheme. BGC should dispose of 75 per cent of its showrooms over 5 years with the other 25 per cent held by the new BGC subsidiary. The corporation would be required to ensure fair competition between the private sector and its subsidiary and to sell off the latter as soon as possible’ (Joseph, 1981).

The defining of practice by these political entrepreneurs represent very different responses to the proposed private market logic which the Conservative government were attempting to implement at the organisational and field level. Given that the desired result of privatisation was to produce competitive and efficient markets, it is clear that suggestions (i) offered by the Department of Trade and (ii) offered by the Department of Industry would go some way in achieving this goal. What is critical here is the response of Lawson who was considered to be key to implementing privatisation given (given that his beliefs mirrored the ambitions of the conservative government and that he was recruited by Thatcher to advocate privatisation). Lawson's issue with the complete disposal of BGCs right to retail appliances appeared to be rooted in the notion that for this to be an implementable programme, there was the need to recruit or create specific regulatory roles within the industry whose duty it would be to regulate the industry. Lawson's response is a moment of what appears to be contradictory political work which diminishes the strength of the belief that privatisation would encourage effective and competitive markets which could self-regulate and become naturally competitive and appeared to afford BG a degree of control within the industry. Lawson, whilst aware that a radical departure from current industrial structures was needed, recognised the hold of the BGCs vertically integrated structure alongside the support for the organisation would make change difficult

'The BGC's dealings with its retailing subsidiary would need to be supervised to ensure that the Corporation did not discriminate against private sector retailers... There is a risk that private sector competitors would simply not be convinced that they could compete on fair terms with BGC subsidiary and might not attempt to enter the market' (Joseph, 1981).

There is evidence that Lawson's contradictory solution was rooted in the belief that any changes made to the organisational structure of BG would trigger widespread opposition from BG, consumers and trade unions alike and that it would be difficult to immediately disrupt and change the normative networks which existed

'The Secretary of State for Energy said he was concerned about the risk of strike action in the gas industry if the statement were made as planned. BGC's view is that unions would respond with an immediate token strike, and that they would draw up plans for longer term action...He was not questioning the decision that had been taken to dispose of the gas showrooms; but he believed that a postponement...would enable the Government to spend more time trying to soften up the unions and generally to improve the atmosphere for acceptance of the decision...Secondly, it would provide time for Ministers to consider further the contingency arrangements that would be needed for dealing with possible strike action' (McCarthy, 1991).

Lawson's concerns demonstrate, that whilst on a regulative level changes could be made, it was the normative and cognitive levels which would impede the implementation of the privatisation programme; further technical and cultural work were required and further theorisation was needed concerning new models of practice. Resistance to the decision to remove BGCs rights to retail were also echoed by other political actors

'The motion arises from a serious apprehension on the part of the Opposition and many other people that the Government may decide to embark upon what is called the radical and extreme option in the recent Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the gas industry, which would involve forcing the British Gas Corporation to end its retailing arm, its huge sales of

retail gas appliances, and force it to withdraw from that market, presumably without compensation, leading in turn to the inevitable closure of 900 gas showrooms, which provide excellent service to the public.

The Opposition believe that such a move would not only be unfair and wounding to the British Gas Corporation, which is one of our most successful publicly owned industries, but would have serious consequences for public safety and service. The matter arises because the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, acting on a reference by the Director General of Fair Trading in 1977, produced a report in July last year which, among other things, considered the so-called extreme option to which I have referred' (HC DE, 17 June 1981).

The above statements demonstrate that the national market logic was still firmly rooted at multiple levels of society. BGCs success and necessity to post-war recovery and redevelopment meant that actors put it in a privileged position and adamantly resisted the notion of any form of disruption or change to its operation. What is more, the above statement highlights that a lack of work on behalf of the Conservative government had been done to ensure that the results of the MMC report 1980 were still relevant to the industry; the report's findings were based upon assessments made in 1977. This latter point again illuminating the lack of preparation done by the Conservative government during its early years, but also representing that in a sense, any resource would be utilised to legitimise the government's action towards liberalising the gas industry. Despite these concerns, a complete withdrawal from the retail market over a five-year period was put in motion

'The Government accepted very serious findings in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission Report about the extent to which the Corporation's monopoly had acted against the public interest, thorough and effective action to restore free competition had to be taken. The changes that will result are

also consistent with the Government's policy of reducing the size of the public sector, by transferring to the private sector activities which could equally well be performed there. This is in itself a major Government objective, vital to the success of our overall economic strategy' (Thatcher, 1981).

The reference to the wider political objective gives some insight into the normative perspective of change and the idea that implementing privatisation was considered to be the way things ought to be done.

Once the selloff had been agreed, Lawson's fears of opposition to the suggestion of BGs complete withdrawal from the retail of gas appliance were solidified as BG and trade unions were not passive in their response. Trade Unions argued against the advocacy of the sell off and engaged in political work

'It is a National strike, every branch district and Region in the country...Not pay dispute or conditions dispute- this is dispute about the future of gas industry an people's jobs' (Union Meeting, 1981).

The lack of support for the decision emanated from the fact that there was a lack of technical work and technical discussion surrounding the break-up of BGCs retail monopoly and the long-term effects this may have. This is perhaps down to the fact that much of the technical work carried out in this early period was performed by academics and economists associated with the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA). The group of academics was made up of individuals from the Economics and Commerce Department at University of Birmingham and were explicit advocates of the Austrian approach to economics and 'all were outside the mainstream of academic economic, and all preferred policy to theory and had little faith in detailed mathematical, statistical, and econometric analysis' (Helm, 2003: 60). The Austrian approach helped define Thatcher and



Lawson's ethos regarding privatisation, but did little to actually empirically test whether its claims and recommendations were valid and instead positioned itself in the idea that markets were superior to governments and excessive regulation (Helm, 1986, 2003).

BGC echoed the union opinions in that the organisation remained unconvinced by the proposed Conservative privatisation programme and called into question and challenged wider affects the privatisation process would have on their organisation, the industry and consumers alike. In a statement, BG expressed these concerns

'From what has been revealed so far, however, it is not clear how the nation's 15 million domestic gas users and 550,000 commercial and industrial users will benefit, and in its discussion with the Government the Corporation will use all its endeavours to protect the interests of those consumers' (British Gas, 1981: 1)

'In particular the Corporation will be stressing the value to the nation's gas users of the integrated structure of the British Gas industry. The flexibility this provides on gas transmission was dramatically demonstrated last week when a strike by Norwegian workers on the Frigg field cut off over a third of all Britain's gas suppliers' (British Gas, 1981: 3).

The values behind these statements are crucial when I consider who within the gas industry held these beliefs. What is more, the statement above demonstrates that institutional actors internal to BG were not simply passive actors, they possessed their own views regarding the way in which the organisation should operate. The privatisation programme proposed by Lawson and the Conservative government had to be translated on an organisational level by top-level managers

who had been appointed before and during the post-war recovery period of nationalised industries, as such they were very much in favour of the national market logic of the previous government and remained fairly un-responsive to the proposition of a private market logic. Denis Rooke (then Chairman of BG) is a key institutional actor here as he was incremental in the development of nationalised policies and contracts relating to BGC during the post war period. There was direct opposition in the values and beliefs of Lawson and Rooke, with the former championing the private market logic and the latter the national market logic. A failing in the political work of the Conservative government was that only two individuals (Martin Jacomb and Leslie Smith) were recruited to join BG's board. With only two 'outsiders' on the board of BGC, there existed a lack of support for privatisation from within the organisation which meant the implementation of institutional change remained a difficult and challenging process.

BGC, like the union were sceptical of how the new rules and regulations were to be theorised and made into standard practice

'No indication is given on how British Gas, as the leading appliance seller, might withdraw from retailing, save that it should be phased over three years, without severe disruption and virtual collapse of the market. The Commission is totally silent on the enormous costs of such a move; on the losses it would cause to existing large investment premises, stores and equipment used in British Gas retailing and servicing' (BG, 1981: 9).

'Any move to adopt the extreme conclusions relies upon a theoretical hypothesis which equates privately controlled and financed business with competition, efficiency, growth and success. As an experiment the risk of divesting British Gas of its retailing activity is too great...Retailing is a fundamental part of the business of the Corporation, which is widely

regarded as the most successful among the nationalised industries and whose record of growth and profitability stands comparison with the best of the private sector' (BG, 1981: 9).

From the perspective of the organisation, not enough work had been done by way of defining the new rules and regulations proposed by the government, and there appeared to be no transparency in the technicalities of the removal of the retailing arm. For BGC, it was difficult to envision the entrenchment of new practice in a normative sense. The identity which BGC had constructed for themselves was one which was prosperous and stronger than any privatised entity could be. The morals and values of the national market logic remained firmly intact within BGC and there is evidence of the organisation even trying to influence political work

'If Government policy requires the recruitment of private capital, consideration should perhaps be given to the introduction of a shareholding in the integrated Corporation rather than risking the piecemeal break-up of an economic structure which has a proven record of success' (British Gas, 1981: 3).

This suggestion by BGC for the organisation to be a privatised vertically integrated organisational was to become fundamental in the next three years of the energy debate.

With regards to BG's retailing capabilities, it was decided there would be a complete withdrawal of the organisation over a five year period. Selection here was not so much done by Lawson, but was forced through more so because of trade unions and strike action. Lawson himself appeared to revert to what Thatcher would term a One Nation 'wet' as his response to the potential reaction of closing gas retailing units was precautionary with the endeavour to avoid strike action and uproar

from BG. This sentiment going against Thatcherite belief, but also appeared to serve to satisfy the union's position which Thatcher and Joseph sought to remove and built their conceptualisations of neoliberalism upon. Thatcherism and its related organic ideology, despite its apparent success in removing BGs retailing arm and restricting their capabilities in the search for oil (although limitedly), appeared to remain a counter-hegemony of sorts (in that it was still the weak in comparison to the nationalised mind-set). Consensus amongst political society had not yet been achieved. This notion is concurrent with analysis from my previous chapter wherein I found that whilst the private market had been pushed upon industry, remnants of the national market logics in terms of structure of the industry remained relatively intact.

On the idea of actors being strategically capable as a result of their expertise; making Thatcherism hegemonic was marred by the fact that Lawson did not possess previous experience within the industry and thus was not an 'expert' in the technicalities of the industries, where conversely, Rooke was able to draw upon his many years of experience within the industry. Indeed, Rooke was dubbed 'Mr Gas Industry...One of Britain's most distinguished civil engineers' (Goodman, 2008). What I find during this phase of Thatcherism as imaginary in relation to energy is organic intellectuals, such as Lawson who lack industry expertise, calling upon traditional intellectuals in the form of academics to provide technical expertise. In a Gramscian sense, traditional intellectuals do not typically have any duties related to the development of strategy and action, but there is the opportunity for these traditional intellectuals to traverse the boundaries between the two categorisations (Gramsci, 1971). Sum and Jessop (2013) highlight that in the process of VSR, traditional intellectuals can emerge as organic.

### 6.2.3 Institutionalising markets:

The third phase of Thatcherism as identified by Jessop (2015) is the phase of *consolidated Thatcherism 1982-1987*. This period saw the Thatcherite government present a more radical programme during the 1983 general election. This programme consisted of a neoliberal accumulation strategy, a ‘strong state’ project and a ‘two nations’ authoritarian populism (Jessop, 2015). This economic programme was designed to roll back Keynesian economic commitment to full employment and the welfare state, intensify privatisation and roll out entrepreneurialism and capitalism. During this phase, Thatcherism was committed to a more radical neoliberal project which aimed to restructure society as a whole and reorganize a wide range of institutions within civil society (Jessop, 2015). The consolidation efforts of Thatcherism was a chaotic phase in which the emergent strategic line of Thatcherism took some time to develop. The initial economic programme of this period was one of public spending cuts and the tight control over money supplies, attacking the position of trade unions and placing faith in the powers of the market (Jessop, 2015). A fully neo-liberal project was not in motion during this period, and Thatcher’s policies were received with mixed emotions in the face of recession and unemployment.

Opposing parties such as the Labour party offered a counter-hegemony to that of the initial consolidation efforts of Thatcherism as an imaginary which sought to restore the nationalised mind-set and undo the initial consolidation efforts of Thatcher’s organic ideology

‘We will bring Britoil back into public ownership and combine it with BNOC to create a powerful national oil corporation with full powers to engage in all aspects of oil-related activities. We will restore to the new corporation a minimum 50 per cent stake in all fields discovered since 1975;

and, in line with our objective to bring North Sea oil into public ownership and control, the public sector will have the dominant role in all future oil and gas exploration and development in the North Sea' (Labour Party Manifesto, 1983).

To counter this, the more radical neoliberal project which Jessop (2015) has identified was evident at the energy industry level. Where in the previous period the government had attempted to liberalise specific aspects of the gas industry and BG, the period of 1982-1987 saw a moment of variation wherein the consolidation efforts of Thatcherism challenged the structure of the gas industry and BG as a whole. This period saw a fuller implementation of the organic ideology of the social market economy as outlined by Keith Joseph. The narrative reasoning behind the attack upon the industry was

'A company which has to satisfy its customers and compete to survive is more likely to be efficient, alert to innovation, and genuinely accountable to the public. That is why we have transferred to private ownership, in whole or in part, Cable and Wireless, Associated British Ports, British Aerospace, Britoil, British Rail Hotels, Amersham International, and the National Freight Corporation. Many of their shares have been bought by their own employees and managers, which is the truest public ownership of all' (Conservative Election Manifesto, 1983).

Here, the hegemonic class is discursively drawing upon previous successful transfers of ownership to not only justify the moment of variation. In being discursively selective, provide some semiotic understanding of why privatisation is the correct strategy and in doing so, make reference to some of the ideas initially outlined in the 1975 think tank report concerning why Britain needs a social market economy. Specifically, reference made to share owners fed into this organic ideology.

This period saw the emergence of a new organic intellectual who would be asked with implementing the Thatcherite hegemonic vision. In 1983, Peter Walker was appointed as the new Secretary of State for Energy, taking over the role from Nigel Lawson. Given that a crucial factor of successful political work is the recruitment of relevant actors for the generation of support and the establishment of new rules and regulations, Peter Walker in hindsight could perhaps be considered an odd choice for the achievement of privatisation in line with Thatcher's desired goals. Walker's views concerning privatisation were very different to his predecessor Lawson's; Walker openly dismissed the idea of competitive regional models and argued that the idea of breaking up BGC was 'lunacy', his goal was to have a 'powerful British Company which would compete round the world' (Walker, 1991: 190). The beliefs and values of Walker were more aligned to those of the adherent to the national market logic and indeed, the beliefs and values of those actors such as Denis Rooke operating within BG; these latter points were to have an impact on the notions of ownership and structure during the privatisation process.

Despite his apparent dis-affinity to the Thatcherite privatisation programme, Walker was responsible for the quickest passing of legislation and thus, the most rapid transformation of an industry as large-scale as the gas industry. As discussed, Walker was not an obvious choice for Secretary of State for Energy; he played a central role in achieving the hegemonic vision, but his own personal beliefs were that BG should not be privatised and sold as separate entities. This was to have some influence on the direction of Thatcherite organic ideology in more than one way. In the first instance, Walker's beliefs were actually fairly beneficial to the implementation of the organic ideology. His like-

mindedness with that of Denis Rooke meant that the battle between organic and traditional intellectuals (Lawson-Rooke) experienced in the previous phase of Thatcherism dissipated somewhat. Indeed, to some extent, Walker was able to bring Rooke round to the privatised line of reasoning (not without some struggle). Organic intellectuals recognised Rooke as a difficulty, but also realised that in order for privatisation to be successful, he was a necessary component to the neoliberal strategy, here I see evidence of organic intellectuals employing an agential selectivity and utilising a traditional intellectual to achieve their hegemonic vision

‘The Chancellor has seen the minute from Secretary of State for Energy to the Prime Minister...Proposing the reappointment of Sir Dennis Rooke for 3 years. He has commented that 3 years is too long. Ideally, we need a period sufficiently long to allow Rooke to lead BGC through privatisation, but no longer. This will increase his commitment to a successful privatisation. (Moreover, he would be a menace in the private sector!)’ (BGC Chairman, 1986).

Walker acknowledged that privatisation efforts would not be possible without the efforts of Rooke. Rooke became a key asset in the strategy of implementing privatisation and the floatation of shares. He had the capacity to have an effect on the internal board of BG as he possessed the knowledge, experience and respect of individuals with an affinity to nationalised industries and possessed the ability to implement new codes of conduct within the firm and thus became key to the selection phase of privatising industry.

‘Denis Rooke has given us a great deal of ground out of what is, I believe, a real personal commitment to keeping the floatation on course. But he does now face a considerable selling job with his own Board and will need some substantive help from us in getting the package through. It is particularly



important that we now make clear what we intend for the employee share scheme... The basic political commitment is required now if we are to harness BCS's effort and resource fully in support of our objective for wider share ownership' (British Gas Privatisation, 1986).

The hegemonic class essentially had no choice but to offer Rooke what he wanted, he had become central to the strategies and tactics of securing Thatcherite hegemony and was key to winning over actors within civil society.

On the subject of flotation and issuing shares, this period is perhaps the first time I see organic political actors engaging directly with civil society. The selling of shares became a crucial tactic in winning consent for privatisation. In offering shares, the entrepreneurial and individualist spirit evoked by Thatcherite organic ideology was translated in a monetary sense through monetary reward. The 'Sid' campaign although it appears as cultural work in a neo-institutionalist sense, is actually inherently political as it was a strategy employed by the government to create a market big enough so that shares could be created. It was also a way to appease those individuals who were producing counter hegemonies.

Despite Jessop (2015) arguing that it took a considerable amount of time for Thatcherite economic strategic line to emerge, this idea of flogging the family silver became synonymous and almost symbolic of the privatisation process and the Thatcherite government; flogging the family silver served a metaphor that could be perceived differently across different levels of society. From a political, economic, and market driven perspective it could be argued that selling assets such as nationalised companies is the sign of a responsible institution and good institutional practice, whilst a more societal or consumer based perception could be that selling such assets is the sign of a failing institution and an act of desperation (Davidson,

2015). The speed at which the hegemonic project of privatisation pushed through meant that the strategies and tactics employed were perhaps not as pervasive as they should have been. This meant that the gas industry and BG in particular remained in a monopoly structure.

#### **6.2.4 Securing competition, let us try that again:**

The third phase of Thatcherism offered by Jessop (2015) is *The blowback and the decomposition of radical Thatcherism during 1988-1990* was a period during which economic trends moving against the government inflation and an escalating money supply was reflected in a growth in trade deficits, rising interest rates, increasing wage demands and a collapse in asset prices (Jessop, 2015). There were also significant defeats politically within this period, notably the resignation of Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson over issues concerning the handling of issues relating to health, rail and road transport, and the privatisation of water and electricity (Jessop, 2015). The years of 1989-1990 mark the demise of Margaret Thatcher. This idea was further cemented with the introduction of the highly unpopular poll tax that served to highlight the Thatcherite disenchantment and disillusionment with the British public.

Despite this period being considered as the demise of Thatcherism at a macro level, rife with political issues, this was not completely reflected at the industry level and in micro level policy. Where Jessop (2015) identifies this phase of Thatcherism as beginning in 1989, for my sector specific periodisation I would argue that this phase begins at 1988. This is because of a key moment of variation through the 1988 MMC report which (as discussed in chapter 5), saw Cecil Parkinson (Secretary of

State for Energy) report BG to the MMC over concerns with the maintenance of their monopoly structure. The MMC report, whilst a crucial moment of variation for the operation of BG and the gas industry; served as a key reflexive moment for the privatisation of electricity.

This reflexive moment allowed the hegemonic class to refocus their organic ideology in the privatisation of electricity and the CEGB

‘In framing my proposals for privatisation, I have adopted six principles:

-Decisions about the supply of electricity should be driven by the needs of customers.

-Competition is best guarantee of customers’ interests.

-Regulation should be designed to promote competition, oversee prices and protect the customers’ interests in areas where natural monopoly will remain.

- Security and safety of supply must be maintained.

-Customers should be given new rights, not just safeguards.

-All who work in the industry should be offered a direct stake in their future, new career opportunities and the freedom to manage their commercial affairs without interference from Government’ (Secretary of State for Energy, 1988).

What I find here is that the hegemonic class hark back to the initial conceptualisations of the social market economy offered by Keith Joseph in the initial years of Thatcherism as a social movement. The consumer is mentioned throughout the above and within the corresponding documentation relating to the privatisation of the electricity industry and the notion of the market, organisations and structures working for the society is evoked.

The 1988 White Paper 'Privatising Electricity' began to plant the seeds for electricity privatisation and appeared to be driven by two key ideas; ending the monopoly that existed within the electricity market and also to focus further on the needs of the consumer and employees. Some of the guiding beliefs outlined in this White Paper were related to the way in which

'Decisions about the supply of electricity should be driven by the needs of customer' and it was argued that 'competition is the best guarantee of the customers' interests' (Secretary of State for Energy, 1988: 2).

The White Paper is significant as it represented two competing logics in the privatisation of the electricity industry. On the one hand there existed the persistent national market logic, which was more so championed by actors embedded within the exchange field within organisations and also the general public. On the other hand, there were the 'competitive marketeers' (Helm, 2003: 128) who were responsible for the initial legitimisations and translations into practice of the private market logic. Structurally, the former advocated a monopoly model (not unlike the mode of operation which existed after the privatisation of BG) and the latter favoured the competitive model. If the modified monopoly model was pursued, then the CEGB would have retained its monopoly structure and would have the power to carry forward the nuclear programme as well as the provision of electricity where costs would have been passed through the Regional Electricity Companies (RECs) and the consumer. From the perspective of key institutional actors on the political level, the proposed competition model better reflected the societal level logic of the capitalist market in the manifestation of profit accumulation and efficiency through the promotion of competition and the commodification of electricity.

So how was this policy-making narrative of the 1998 White Paper built into a framework for action? The Electricity Act 1989 was a key piece of legislation for allowing the provisions for the privatisation of the electricity market; it laid the statutory foundations from which the energy industry could be restructured and privatised. Much like within the gas industry, the key values guiding behaviour and action in the privatisation of electricity was the private market logic, which became institutionalised through regulation, ownership and finance. However, one distinct difference is evident between the privatisation of the gas and electricity industry; the electricity industry was actually restructured prior to market liberalisation. This was in response by the government as a result of the issues experienced within the gas industry and the selling of British Gas as a private monopoly (Simmonds, 2002). Whilst the logics of ownership and the market still prevail during the privatisation of electricity in that there is a concern with competitive market forces, structural organisation and supply and demand, the way in which these logics constrain or promote institutional change became somewhat historically contingent as a result of prior experience in privatising the gas industry (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a). This historical contingency thus affected the ways in which institutional structures were organised.

Placing an emphasis on competition and allowing market forces to promote competition and efficiency are key values of the private market logic, this emphasis is described by Parker, (1999: 213) as ‘unbundling’ which is the process of separating areas of an industry that are potentially competitive from the monopoly parts. Ideally competition, as a product of privatisation, would remove any monopoly conditions wherever it is deemed economically possible and beneficial, but this then leaves remaining parts of the industry as a monopoly. With the 1988 White paper

partly being driven by the interests of the consumer, there was an even greater need to ensure the forcible regulation was in place to avoid consumer exploitation by the remaining monopoly structures (Parker, 1999). This sentiment reflects the initial outlines of the White paper wherein Cecil Parkinson recommended that

‘Regulation should be designed to promote competition, oversee prices and protect the customers’ interest in areas where natural monopoly will remain’ (Secretary of State for Energy, 1988).

This statement also interestingly shed lights on the fact that even before the market logic was translated into a coherent frame for action, there was the pre-empted understanding that complete liberalisation of the industry was perhaps not economically viable.

There is a degree of historically contingent learning occurring in the regulation of the electricity industry, whilst the general structure of the regulatory bodies were concurrent with that of the gas market, a fundamental difference was that the advent of the pool and the structural changes made possibly by the 1988 White Paper and the Electricity Act 1989, meant that the industry had been sufficiently restructured and the monopoly firm structure had been at least somewhat removed with other firms being introduced into the market.

### **6.2.5 Repackaging privatisation and the legacy of Thatcherism:**

Here I will outline Jessop’s (2015) final two phases of Thatcherism together, they are *Thatcherism with a grey face, 1990-1997* and *Thatcherism with a Christian socialist face 1997-2010*. I do so because both of these phases represent a repackaged variant of Thatcherism and thus highlight the legacy of Thatcher’s strategic line and

neoliberal regime. The former phase of Thatcherism was a period in which neoliberal policies were pursued less vigorously, the conservative government came under further attack with accusations of financial corruption, political malpractice and the growing signs of party disunity and the weakening of conservative leadership. The public consensus was that of the need for change and thus the Labour party became an attractive candidate for leadership once again (Jessop, 2015). The latter saw the emergence of a Labour party who underwent radical changes in their political identity in terms of political rhetoric and organisation. This, in combination with the growing public dissatisfaction with conservative leadership, New Labour won the 1997 general election convincingly (Jessop, 2015). Tony Blair's emergent strategic line was more of a continuation of neoliberal transformation. This reinvention of neoliberalism became synonymous with the 'third way' (Jessop, 2015).

Off the back of the OFT review and with the appointment of a new Conservative Prime Minister (John Major) in 1990; there appeared to be a shift in focus with regards to the operation and provision of energy and in the provision of public services in general in Britain. The intersubjective experience of actors, in this case the consumer, had implications on the material and ideational foundation of the poor provision of energy through a privatised market. With the institutional logic values of state bureaucracy encompassing effective state control over public services (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012), there was the need to reinforce the regulation of activities and structural hierarchies at the industry level through the sustainability and resource logic of operation.

In 1991-1992, The Citizen's Charter White Paper was developed. This White paper represented a fundamental shift in thinking in relation to the way in which public services were delivered in the country, this shift privileged and legitimised the perspectives of those using public services and gave them much greater prominence in the structural changes made at the industry and organisational level. It was recognition that the private market logic had created institutional structures which enabled values and beliefs which were more geared towards the managerial logic of operation (relating to increasing market shares and size of the firm), rather than achieving the values and norms of efficiency, competition and improved resources. The intention of the Citizen's Charter was to combat this and

'Work for quality across the whole range of public services. It will give support to those who use services in seeking better standards. People who depend on public services- patients, passengers, parents, pupils, benefit claimants- all must know where they stand and what service they have the right to expect' (Major, 1991).

Where in the initial years of privatisation of the gas market there was a focus upon finances and ownership, the 1990s was characterised still by a focus upon ownership, but with greater regard to regulation. Given the criticisms of the MMC and the OFT Review, it became evident that institutional structures implemented by the private market logic were not conducive in creating efficient and competitive markets, the values of the private market logic had not been coherently translated into institutional structures across various levels of the exchange field. What is more, it was evident that community welfare in provision, transparency and fairness of use was also lacking for the domestic tariff consumer. What ensued after these reports was the commitment to opening



up the gas market to competition and the further breakdown of BGs monopoly structure.

In 1997, despite Britain experiencing relative economic prosperity and the gas and electricity industries appearing to become more competitive, John Major's government was defeated in the general election and the election of Tony Blair signalled a shift back to a Labour government. Blair's government was driven by similar motivations to that of previous Labour governments wherein there was a concern for national welfare and indeed, the concept of modernisation (which I discussed earlier in the chapter in relation to post-war Britain) emerged once again. A fundamental difference in Blair's government was that where modernisation had previously been pursued for recovery, in a renewed sense, it was a concept that signalled a prosperous welfare state

'I want a country in which people get on, do well, make a success of their lives. I have no time for the politics of envy. We need more successful entrepreneurs, not fewer of them. But these life-chances should be for all the people. And I want a society in which ambition and compassion are seen as partners not opposites - where we value public service as well as material wealth' (Labour Party Manifesto, 1997).

The language of the Party manifesto is very much indicative of what became termed as the New Labour political programme, indeed Blair himself dubbed his politics as centre-left politics. The norms, values and beliefs of the New Labour government were encompassed in the notion of 'modern welfare' where there was an apparent social commitment and consideration of community welfare and prosperity as per the bureaucratic state logic at the societal level, but there also existed a commitment to the capitalist market logic too in that privatised industries were to remain. At the exchange field level, this translated to the

collaboration of the private market logic and the sustainability and resource logic. The New Labour government sought to alleviate the tensions that existed between government and industry and appeared to delegitimise the strategies of both past Labour and Conservative governments

‘The old left would have sought state control of industry. The Conservative right is content to leave all to the market. We reject both approaches. Government and industry must work together to achieve key objectives aimed at enhancing the dynamism of the market, not undermining it.

In **industrial relations**, we make it clear that there will be no return to flying pickets, secondary action, strikes with no ballots or the trade union law of the 1970s. There will instead be basic minimum rights for the individual at the workplace, where our aim is partnership not conflict between employers and employees’ (Labour Party Manifesto, 1997).

The emphasis upon partnership with industry would be the beginning of Labour’s most controversial policies of Public-private partnerships (PPPs). The PPPs were not unique to the Labour government, in fact they were championed under Conservative governments but were more financially oriented and served to legitimise the primacy of the private sector over the public sector. PPPs under the Conservative government legitimised the managerial logic of operation wherein the public sector was exposed to ‘private sector methods and management techniques, and to the disciplines of the market’ (Falconer, Peter and McLaughlin, 2000: 120). Labour had initially contested PPPs and the way in which they had reformed the public sector, but under Tony Blair, this position was reversed and Labour’s allegiance with PPPs was strong.

In 1997, off the back of the rhetoric related to the socially committed public-private logic, the first piece of legislation encompassing the values and beliefs of the

New Labour government was the windfall tax. Under the public-private logic, there was the idea belief that liberalisation could work better to serve social objectives (Pearson and Watson, 2012). The windfall tax was imposed upon privatised utilities as it had been observed that organisations were making large profits given the minimal competition they faced and the size of the market share they possessed. The windfall tax outlined

‘1.-(1) Every company which, on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1997, was benefitting from a windfall from the flotation of an undertaking whose privatisation involved the imposition of economic regulation shall be charged with a tax (to be known as the “windfall tax”) on the amount of that windfall.

(2) Windfall tax shall be charged at the rate of 23 per cent’ (Finance (No. 2) Act, 1997: 1).

‘(5) For the purpose of this section a company was, at the time of its flotation, carrying an undertaking whose privatisation involved the imposition of economic regulation if that company, or a company which at that time was a subsidiary undertaking of that company, was at that time-

...(c) the holder of an authorisation granted under section 7 of the Gas Act 1986, as originally enacted (public gas suppliers)’ (Finance (No. 2) Act, 1997: 2-3).

The tax called into question those organisations that had been privatised under the previous Conservative government and sought to disrupt and further delegitimise the private market logic which they attempted to institutionalise in the exchange field.

### 6.3 Summary of CPE empirical findings and analysis:

In this chapter, I have presented the historical narrative of the privatisation of the British gas and electricity industries (BG and CEGB respectively) through an extended institutional analytical lens. Empirically, this chapter addresses (RQ2) what imaginaries are present during the privatisation of the British energy sector and which imaginary is hegemonic? And the sub-research questions 2(a) *how did this imaginary come into being?* 2(b) *how does an imaginary change and evolve?* And 2(c) *how can an imaginary be translated into policy and legislation?* Another goal of this chapter was to overcome some of the limitations of the neo-institutional frameworks for analysis identified in chapter 5. These limitations related to the unidirectional nature of the discussion of change, the privileging of either structure or agency and the lack of political theorisation of neo-institutionalism. The latter point is crucial to the contribution of this dissertation; by engaging with CPE as an alternative institutional approach; I have attempted to bring back in considerations of the political, political ideology and the interests of elites (similar to notions from old institutionalism) back into a neo-institutional analysis.

Where chapter 5 told provided a complete narrative (from a neo-institutional lens) relating to the changes which occurred from 1942-2007; this chapter built upon the narrative foundation to analyse specifically key moments or events which are pertinent to the discussion of institutional change from a CPE lens. More explicitly, I have employed the CPE concept of the imaginary and its related generative mechanisms of variation, selection and retention to exemplify critical moments of crisis which lead to changing ideology and thus, changing strategies, tactics and operations the macro and micro (foundational) level of analyses. I have engaged with

the Gramscian concepts of hegemony, historical bloc and intellectuals to further analyse how an imaginary comes in to being and to identify counter-hegemonies which existed during the period in question.

## **Chapter 7: Findings and Discussion**

In this chapter, I will relate my analytical findings to both the institutional theory literature and the cultural political economy literature. In chapter 2, I reviewed institutional logics and institutional work as two dominant approaches for the study of institutional change. I found both of these approaches useful for the discussion and analysis of change at a micro and micro-foundational level. The former allowed for the identification of dominant, multiple and competing logics. Whilst the latter provided a categorisation of the types of work organisations and institutional actors do in to contribute to the change, maintenance and/or disruption of institutions. Whilst these frameworks were useful, they fell short of accounting for analysis on a macro, political level, which was particularly important in the context of British Gas, where the majority of change initiatives involved political actors – not only as instigators but as being involved in the on-going elaboration of the vision and legal translation of privatisation.

In chapter 3, I therefore turned to the cultural political economy literature where I focused upon the critical realist work of Sum and Jessop (2013) to aid the consideration of an alternative or extended institutional approach. CPE provided tools for a strategic-relational analysis of institutional change, with the concept of the imaginary allowing for an ideological, macro analysis. The generative mechanisms of VSR then enabled me to engage with the concepts of hegemonic battles amongst intellectuals at different levels within the exchange field. In this chapter, I will elaborate how a critical realist and relational approach to institutional change may allow for a more processual account of institutional change, which encompasses

levels other than the micro and recover some forgotten ideas from old institutionalism. I am particularly interested in the linkages between both levels of engagement, including, for instance, the on-going translations of cultural political imaginaries into organizational strategies; the disjuncture between both (e.g. where organizational actors disregard or modify political ideals). Finally, on an analytical level, I am interested in the interplay of CPE and Institutional Theory/Work, and how the combination of both analytical tropes can aid analysis of large institutional change phenomena and where both disconnect.

### **7.1 Revisiting institutional theory and institutional change:**

Chapter 2 provided a succinct review of institutional theory over the past four to five decades, as the dominant approach for understanding institutional and organisational change. The chapter specifically focused upon two dominant streams of neo-institutional theory, institutional logics and institutional work to provide the conceptual basis to address **(RQ1):** *what were the changing institutional logics and how were these changes enacted by key players within the market?*

In reviewing the two bodies of literature pertaining to logics and work, I have endeavoured to demonstrate that both offer useful conceptualisations, particularly at a micro level of discussion of change. In chapter 5, I have shown that both the logics and work framework allow for the analysis of change at the exchange-field level and for the identification of organisational responses to, and initiatives in, changing field-level logics. I found the consideration of the macro context of change, specifically considerations of politics, political ideology and

the interests of elites was lacking, all concepts which were more prevalent in ‘old institutionalism’. In chapter 5, I have shown that whilst there is some consideration of political tension and struggle, there is limited discussion of political ideology and its influences upon the micro level (beyond using politics as a proxy for change).

### **7.1.1 Institutional logics:**

My literature review began with the work of Friedland and Alford (1991), Thornton and Ocasio (2008) and Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury (2012), providing the conceptual basis for identifying ... *the changing institutional logics during the process of privatising the British gas and electricity?* Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury (2012: 2) describe institutional logics as

‘Socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences’.

Many studies focusing on institutional logics are concerned with the role these logics play in shaping organisational actions and outcomes and of the effect of the transition from one dominant logic to another (Gawer and Phillips, 2013).

My findings pertaining to logics in chapter 5 enabled me capture the societal level logics of the capitalists market, the bureaucratic state and of corporations (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a). I found that these societal logics translated into various competing logics at the exchange field level, each with their own material and symbolic foundations and each operating at multiple levels wherein there were differing expectations of these logics. Capitalist



markets emerged as both the national market logic with core beliefs and values of nationalised capital and the achievement of national goals. The private market logic which promoted a neoliberal capitalist market whose beliefs and values centred around private ownership, competition and free markets; and finally, the public-private logic which remained faithful to the notion of the market, but had an inherently stronger social focus. The bureaucratic state logic emerged as the resource and sustainability logic in the field, here there was concern with regulation and security of energy supply and finally, the managerial logic emerged, more strongly as a result of the private market logic.

### **7.1.2 Institutional work:**

The second trope of neo-institutional literature related to institutional work. This allowed me to address research question 1(b): *How did organisations respond to and initiate changing logics at the field level?* Whilst organisations respond to changing field-level logics, they should not be considered as passive or submissive actors. Here emerges the need for the discussion of institutional work which is defined as ‘the purposive action of individuals and organisations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions’ (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 215). The mechanisms outlined here are active and draw my attention the effect of actions upon institutions and indeed, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) argue that studies in institutional work should be centred around three key elements relating to

‘The awareness, skill and reflexivity of individual and collective actors’ (219); to create an understanding of ‘institutions as constituted in the more or less conscious action of individual and collective actors’ (219); and finally, for those embarking on institutional work studies to realise that ‘we cannot step outside action as practice- even action which is aimed at changing the

institutional order of an organizational field occurs within a set of institutionalized rules' (220).

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) develop their perspective of institutional work from Jepperson's (1991) definition of institutions as both the intentional and unintentional product of purposive action. Jepperson's definition is crucial as it develops the perspective of institutions as passive constructions of meaning by participants, to viewing institutions as patterns of interaction supported by mechanisms of control, thus institutions are the product of action with the aim of reproduction, change and destruction. Key in this discussion is that agents are viewed as reflexive and capable beings. This perspective allows me to attribute a richer role to agents within the discussion of the privatisation of the British

## **7.2 Cultural political economy as an extended institutional approach:**

In chapter 3, I introduced cultural political economy as an institutional approach. Providing a review of the CPE literature provided the basis for addressing **(RQ2):** *what imaginaries are present during the privatisation of the British energy sector and which imaginary is hegemonic?* I turned to this literature as it considered institutions in a political economic sense, but with this, presenting a review of literature relating to imaginaries, hegemony and intellectuals, I sought to address the sub research questions 2(a): *how did this imaginary come into being?* 2(b): *How does an imaginary change and evolve?* And 2(c): *how can an imaginary be translated into policy and legislation?* Semiosis and its sense- and meaning-making capabilities are already inherent within the critical realist and strategic –relational paradigms, they are also to some extent present within neo-institutional theory, perhaps more specifically

evident within institutional work and the idea that actors are not passive or submissive to institutions and institutional structures.

Given the ethico-political focus of this dissertation, the discussion of conservative party politics and its close association to neoliberal ideologies becomes crucial. Neoliberalism itself is a heterogeneous set of institutions built upon a range of ideas, associated with market-oriented policy-making, and consists of ways of organising political and economic activity that are quite different from other ideologies (Dean, 2012). As such there are varying definitions and to some extent, ill-represented ideas of what a neoliberal ideology actually consists of. Amable (2010) argues that despite the prevalence of the term neoliberalism in a range of economically, politically and socially inclined debates; its main characteristics are often misinterpreted. Neoliberalism is often associated with economic liberalism or a 'laissez-faire' approach. Prominent economists such as Joseph Stiglitz associate neoliberalism with markets and their capability to self-correct and allocate resources ultimately reducing neoliberalism to a form of 'market fundamentalism', with reduced state and public interventions (Stiglitz, 2008). It is important to highlight that there are several perspectives from which neoliberalism can be discussed.

CPE offers a set of defining features and tools which enable me to explore salient aspects of neoliberalism, particularly the way in which neoliberalism manifested within my period of interest. Specifically, I drew upon Sum and Jessop's (2013) elaboration of the concept of the "imaginary". The imaginary is introduced in their discussion of cultural turns in political economy and as a critique of institutional turns. Where the term institutions denotes the discussion of 'regularizing expectations and conduct within and across different social spheres' (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 29), the imaginary forces a discussion more sympathetic to

understanding semiotic systems that shape and guide lived experience, whilst better capturing the complexities of industries. Both institutions and imaginaries act as a set of mechanisms and both can be productively discussed in conjunction with one another to offer an extended institutional approach

## **7.2 Synthesising neo-institutional theory and CPE:**

In bringing this findings and discussion chapter to a close, I must now consider **(RQ3)** what are the connections and/or disconnections in the theoretical and empirical accounts of neo-institutional and cultural political economy frameworks? This dissertation, in presenting the neo-institutionalist frameworks and the CPE approach has been working towards the idea of an extended institutional approach for explaining and understanding change, which is largely influenced by macro political ideology. This final discussion section will consider first the connections between the two institutional approaches and then highlight the disconnections that encompass my contributions.

### **7.2.1 Period 1- 1965-1979:**

Period 1 presents Thatcherism as a social movement. This period represents a phase of conceptualisation wherein the foundations of Thatcherism as an imaginary are constructed. Key moments of variation during this period are the OPEC oil crisis and the Ridley Plan. These moments of variation called into question the existing Keynesian hegemony and its related welfare state and nationalised industries. I begin to see the emergence of Thatcherite ideology which sought to reduce the power of trade unions and aimed to eradicate nationalised industries for a more business-like model which would make Britain prosperous again. This period is crucial as it saw

the conceptualisation of the social market economy upon which Thatcher's Britain would be built. The ethos of the social market economy is one which would be drawn upon continuously over the coming periods.

### **7.2.2 Period 2- 1979-1982:**

Period two represents the consolidation efforts of Thatcherism as an imaginary. During this period, the imaginary emerges as a strong future narrative for Britain; a version of the development and recovery through which the seeds for privatisation were sewn. At this stage, Thatcherism was merely an *imagined economy* wherein the dynamics of the organic ideology of the social market economy produced moments of variation. These moments of variation occurred through the organic intellectuals associated with the hegemonic class attempting to punctuate the natural monopoly of BG in the oil and gas industries respectively. In this period, the strategy employed by the Thatcherite government did not seek to completely disrupt the organisation's stronghold, but instead began to target specific aspects of the organisation's retailing arm in gas appliances and capacities to search for oil. On a more concrete and regulatory level this offensive move emerged through the tentative legislation of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982.

At the institutional level, the national market logic remains dominant with only the idea of the private market logic emerging through the attempts to break up part of BG's dominant position. Institutional work during this period saw instances of disruption, creation and maintenance. Attempts at institutional disruption and creation work came from political actors such as the Secretary of State for Energy who, through the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act, attempted to create new institutional and regulatory structures intended to promote competition. In removing BG's capability to retail gas appliances and to both search for oil and sell gas, there are

clear initial institutionalising attempts of the private market logic wherein there was the perceived need for competition within the market. However, at the organisational level, BG was able to maintain their monopoly structure despite the political attempts to change the landscape of the exchange field they operate within. This ability to maintain its organisational position of dominance within the market is largely down to the pervasiveness of the national market logic and its associated hegemony, but also down to top-level managers (e.g. Denis Rooke) who possessed the relevant expertise of the industry to resist change and maintain the natural monopoly structure even after legislation was passed. The first period of Thatcherism as an imaginary represents a period by which the organic ideology of Thatcherism emerges but is not yet hegemonic. What is also crucial within this period is the idea that BG already demonstrates its ability to resist change on a political, regulatory and technical level.

### **7.2.3 Period 3- 1983-1988:**

Period three represents a phase of consolidation Thatcherism, this phase saw a more vigorous and intentional approach to the consolidation efforts of the Thatcherite hegemonic project which sought to institutionalise markets. Ideologies relating to a strong state and two nations were evoked and the entrepreneurial and individualistic elements of the social market economy ideological doctrine presented in the previous period were evoked in a stronger manner. The dynamic of Thatcherism as an imaginary pertained to moments of selection and retention. Whereas in the last period I found a moment of variation wherein organic intellectuals attempted to break up only parts of BGs monopoly hold over the market, this period saw a fully-fledged assault on the structure of the gas industry and BGs position within it. Key elements of the hegemonic strategy in this period saw the introduction of central legislation in the Energy Act 1983 and the Gas Act 1986, it is

the latter which specifically targeted the gas industry structure and saw the implementation of regulatory bodies (Gas Consumer Council and OFGAS). Also key to this period was the political initiative for the floatation of BG shares, again this tactic speaking to the social market economy ideology from initial conceptualisation of competitive markets within British industry.

At the institutional level, the private market logic emerges as dominant with where the beliefs, values and norms relating to neoliberal ideology of competitive markets and efficiency of this logic are evident within structural changes and legislative language. Institutional work in this period saw efforts to disrupt existing institutional structures to create new structures which were more conducive to the implementation of Thatcherism as an imaginary and the private market logics. Despite the structural changes made at the institutional level, this period again saw a continuation of BG's dominance and influence within the market. Here, antecedents of the national market logic remained in that BG was privatised as a natural monopoly.

Conversely, this coupled with the floatation of shares, actually served to strengthen BG as a monopoly organisation. The institutional work of this period actually saw the emergence of the managerial logic wherein BG were able to embody the more business-like mode of operation the social market economy ideology called for, but do so in a structure that ensured their dominance within the industry was maintained. Interestingly in this period, I find that organic intellectuals actually call upon top-level managers within BG to aid their efforts in gaining consensus for the Thatcherite hegemonic project; but overall, BG remained in a position of power. Thus, this period saw, to some extent, a transition from Thatcherism as *an imagined*

*economy*, to Thatcherism as an *economy imagined*, but the hegemonic vision of Thatcherism as an imaginary had not been fully translated at the organisational level.

#### **7.2.4 Period 3-1988-1991:**

Period four is described as the blowback and the decomposition of radical Thatcherism. Whilst this is true for Thatcherism as an imaginary in a wider societal sense, the same does not go for Thatcherism as an imaginary at the energy industry level. The hegemonic project of Thatcher was called into question as issues remained in that the gas industry was not competitive and BG remained a monopoly. A key moment of variation here is the 1988 MMC report which called these issues into question and represents a moment wherein counter-hegemonies to Thatcherism emerged. These counter-hegemonies were not so much against Thatcherism as an imaginary, but were more so counter-hegemonic in terms of strategies and tactics aimed at resolving the issue of an anti-competitive market. This variation was also crucial for the subsequent privatisation of the electricity industry. Privatisation of electricity demonstrates the reflexive capabilities of actors in that the electricity industry was restructured somewhat prior to privatisation, but to some extent, the regulatory frameworks and basis of legislation through the Electricity Act 1989 remained fairly similar to that of the Gas Act in 1986. This moment of agential reflexivity is crucial as it demonstrates individuals harking back to the initial conceptualisation of the market in period 1 in order to progress forward with the hegemonic vision once again.

Aside from a moment of reflexivity in the construction of industry structure, the institutional level appeared relatively oblivious to the political tensions which were occurring at a more macro level. The private market logic and the managerial logic remained prevalent during this period and institutional work occurred in the



form of creation and maintenance. The landscape of the electricity industry was created and saw the introduction of multiple entities within the market. Despite this, similar issues to that of BG arose wherein the CEGB were still able to maintain a monopoly position within the market. This period ultimately ends with the resignation of Thatcher in 1990.

#### **7.2.5 Period 5- 1990-2007:**

Period 5 represents two variations of Thatcherism; the first lies with John Major who essentially repackaged Thatcherism as an imaginary. Major's government was plagued with controversy pertaining to financial corruption and political malpractice. These political issues were to some extent reflected at the energy industry level, in 1991 and 1993 respectively, the OFT and MMC produced reports which represent moments of variation wherein the structure and modes of operation of BG were called into question once again. The counter-hegemonies produced against Thatcherism as an imaginary called into question some of the original doctrines of the social market economy ideology. It was found that consumers were not privileged within competitive markets and were not benefiting from competitive pricing strategies. Moments of selection emerge through the 1991 Citizen's Charter Act, 1992 Competition and Services (Utilities) Act, and the 1995 Gas ACT. The emergent strategic line of Major's government employing Thatcherism as an imaginary were once again to hark back to the original conceptualisations of the social market economy, here I see the interests of consumers being at the forefront of strategies and tactics.

At the institutional level, the private market logic remained, although it had a renewed social focus. Institutional work during this period and related to Major's government saw work aimed at disrupting organisational and industry structures.

What is also crucial to this period is that there was an influx of new personnel into the industry; those individuals who were so tightly bound to the nationalised market of operation were no longer in top-level management positions. This change in actors and the efforts of Major's government in disruption industry landscape saw the creation of a new organisational structure of BG; the gas market endured a period of radical change. Whilst issues still remained in levels of competition and consumer protection, this is perhaps the first instance in which the original Thatcherite organic ideology had been translated into an economy imagined.

The second variation of Thatcherism as an imaginary emerges through the election of a New Labour government led by Tony Blair. Blair maintained the organic ideology of Thatcherism and ethos of privatised organisations and competitive markets. Blair's emergent strategic line demonstrates the legacy of Thatcherism being carried forward into the opposition's hegemonic project. Rather than producing a counter-hegemony, Blair employed tactics relating to industry and organisations simply being prosperous, no matter who was in ownership. What Blair did endeavour to do was maintain the socially committed element of both Major's government and the original organic ideology. A key moment of variation in this period emerges through the Windfall tax 1997 wherein the strategy of New Labour was to reduce the excessive profit of large utility organisations (BG in particular). Blair's time in power saw several tactics being employed to reduce the power of large organisations, increase competition and also to restructure industry (The Competition Act, 1998; The Utilities Act, 2000; and The Enterprise Act, 2002).

	1965-1979	1979-1982	1983-1988	1988-1991	1990-2007
Dynamics (VSR)	V S R	V S	S R	V S R	V S R
Abstract (Imaginary)	'Sewing the seeds' Thatcherism as a social movement	'Future narrative' Consolidation efforts	'Strong state' Radical neoliberal programme	'Demise of Thatcherism'	'A new future' 'A third way'
Concrete (Regulatory)	Ridley Plan	Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act	Energy Act Gas Act OFGAS	White Paper (Privatizing Electricity) Electricity Act OFFER	Citizens Charter Competition and Service Utilities Act Gas Act Competition Act Windfall Tax
Institutional logics	National market logic	National market logic Private market logic	Private market logic Managerial logic	Private market logic	Private market logic Public-private logic
Institutional work	Disruption Creation	Disruption Creation Maintenance	Disruption Creation Maintenance	Creation Maintenance	Disruption Creation Maintenance

Handwritten annotations: Red arrows labeled '1' connect 'Future narrative' to 'Strong state' and 'Strong state' to 'Demise of Thatcherism'. Blue arrows labeled '2' connect 'Institutional work' from 1979-1982 to 1983-1988 and 1988-1991 to 1990-2007. Green arrows labeled '3' connect 'Concrete (Regulatory)' from 1965-1979 to 1979-1982, 1979-1982 to 1983-1988, 1983-1988 to 1988-1991, and 1988-1991 to 1990-2007. A large green arrow labeled '3' also connects 'Abstract (Imaginary)' from 1965-1979 to 1990-2007.

Figure 4 A representation of the dialogues and disconnects between neo-institutional theory and CPE

### 7.2.6 Conjunction and disjunction:

I began this dissertation with a desire to explain and understand organisational and institutional change. From my review of the neo-institutional literature, I found that change is often analysed in a linear fashion and chronological fashion. Thornton and Ocasio (2008), as part of their perceived institutional logics meta-theory, do identify historical contingency as key to the discussion and analysis of logics. The logics perspective of history is often presented in an essentialist and measurable manner (Suddaby, Foster and Mills, 2014), assessing whether one set of logics and findings pertaining to logics is relevant to another identifiable period (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008a). Work relating to logics has endeavoured to analyse the upwards and downwards influence of logics, the former exploring the how logics shape organisational fields and organisational behaviour (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006) and the latter studying the logics and organisational influences upon field, narrative, boundaries and practice (Zietsma and Lawrence, 2010). Whilst these are useful discussions, they are more focused upon a more micro discussion of change. For me, this only tells one part of the story of the changes which occurred in the British energy industries 1979-2007.

What I have found in my analysis is that change is not a linear process, whilst it does involve forward thinking; it also involves backward thinking and interaction across multiple levels. *Figure (5)* is an illustration of the more complex nature of change which has emanated from my empirical analysis. I have been able to capture this illustration of change through the employment of the CPE concept of the imaginary and the generative mechanisms of variation, selection and retention (Sum and Jessop, 2013) and the Gramscian concepts of hegemony, historical bloc and intellectuals (organic and traditional) (Gramsci, 1971). In employing these concepts

in my analysis alongside my neo-institutional analysis, I have been able to provide a more complete picture of change which takes into account both the macro and the micro levels of analysis.

The figure illustrates (via the arrows), that change during the privatisation process of the British Gas and electricity industries was as a result of the interaction of multiple levels of analysis, notably between the micro level of institutional work and the macro political and ideological level of the imaginary. The arrows labelled 1 are perhaps most crucial to the discussion of the changes which occurred from 1979-2007. Arrows 1 show that whilst the imaginary of Thatcherism and its distinct iteration and hegemonic vision for each period is key, it does not necessarily have any immediate effect upon the micro organisational level and is not always reflected in the institutional work which is carried out by key actors. What I have found is contention between the institutional work in a period and the imaginary. Instead, what I have found is that whilst the institutional work in distinct periods is in some way (whether directly or indirectly) guided by the prevailing ideology of the specific iteration of the imaginary, those individuals and collectives who carry out institutional work are either working towards something they would like to see in future imaginaries, or working to maintain or disrupt change and adhere to previous iterations of the imaginary.

It is also through arrow 1 where I see the emergence of the idea that an imaginary can have real effects (Castoriadis, 1987), it is not simply a narrative, ideology or social signifier, but the imaginary in fact manifests in economy, material objects, institutions and practices. In not solely focusing upon institutional logics and marrying my analysis with a focus upon institutional work, I have been able to place the imaginary into context and give it an actual place in society at the time (Strauss

and Quinn, 1997; Strauss, 2006). It is through the processes that this arrow represents where I can identify economic imaginaries as per Sum and Jessop (2013) as occurring on multiple sites and scales and encompassing economic relations as well as subsets of extra economic activities. The institutional work which is performed in each distinct period helps to materially and socially reproduce or hinder the existing imaginary in that specific period, it is where hegemonic battles occur and Castoriadis' (1987) notion of instituting and creativity come into play. It is the process by which actors materialise and institute the imaginary within the fixed realms of the already instituted imaginary.

The arrows labelled 2 further demonstrate how change is not a linear and forward thinking process. I find key intellectuals harking back to the initial instantiation of Thatcherism as an imaginary in several instances. They do so to evoke the initial conceptualisations of the social market economy offered by Keith Joseph, Thatcher and the Centre for policy studies. Indeed there is constant reference back to the initial conceptualisations of the market, but what is key here is that where Thatcherism as an imaginary was contested or reconceptualised, there is evidence of direct reference back to the initial publication regarding the social market economy. Here I see evidence of the reconceptualisation of the hegemonic vision and the evoking of the initial organic ideology in strategies, tactics and legislation employed and created by key actors.

Where I discuss key intellectuals, I do make reference to the likes of Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph (particularly in chapter 6), I do so to evoke the neoliberal ideologies that are synonymous with the period in question. When discussing the actual processes of implementing the real effects of the imaginary, i.e. the instituting and materialising process, I more so make reference to key individuals

who are either directly or indirectly in producing or blocking the consent for the hegemonic vision of the ruling class (Gramsci, 1971). Through analysing the change which occurred during the privatisation of the British energy market through both an institutional lens and a CPE lens, I am able to not only identify the types of work which occurred (e.g. political, cultural or technical), but also who was incremental in driving, maintain or disrupting change. Here I find that organic intellectuals recruited by the government were key for processes of achieving consent for the hegemonic visions (e.g. Energy Secretary of State).

Finally, the arrows labelled 3 are indicative of the connection between imaginaries, historical bloc and institutional logics. For Thatcherism to go beyond being an imagined economy to an economy imagined, the strategies and goals the hegemonic project proposed had to be viable socially, economically and politically. Institutional logics are not autonomous and must emanate from some kind of ideological thinking, here employing the concept of the historical bloc allows for the exploration of the consent to a certain social order which has a hand in the production and re-production of hegemonic project of the dominant class through social relations, ideas and institutions (Gramsci, 1971). It is here that Gramsci argues for the importance of political and ideological superstructures, these super structures are crucial for the disruption, creation and maintenance of relations and actions at the economic and organisational level.

The initial conceptualisation of the social market economy offered by Keith Joseph is one which offered an imaginary that when placed in the actual, with real social effects and consequences, would be one which worked for the greater good of civil society. Although it was to some extent contested economically, the initial phase of Thatcherism as an imaginary is one which would appeal to the British

society suffering from weak Labour initiatives and the aftermath of oil crises.

Hegemonic consent somewhat dwindled over the remaining periods, notably until the New Labour governments came to power and sought to remove the power of large corporations. What is evident though, throughout the iterations of the periodisation of Thatcherism and the legacies of Thatcherism, there is always a call back to the social market economy conceptualisation (period 1965-79) where there was consent rather than the need for coercion of civil society to accept the hegemonic vision of the ruling class.

### **7.2.7 Periodisation and a stratified ontology:**

In referring back to my methodology (Chapter 4), I outlined CR as an approach to institutional theory. In outlining the CR and the stratified ontology, I engaged with the notions of the real, the actual and the empirical and relate these to institutional theory. Institutional theory allows for the capturing of the empirical level, I have demonstrated this by tracing the changes which occurred in the energy industry 1979 over the periods which I have identified above. The institutional discussion and analysis manifests at the level of the empirical and is capturable the creation, maintenance and disruption of institutions and the related legislation concurrent with this.

However, what was not visible during my neo-institutional analysis is the underlying mechanisms, which contribute to the changes identifiable on the empirical level. I refer back to the notion of the real as outlined by CR; the real here related to the generative mechanism and causal powers which cause events (Leca, and Naccache, 2006). Employing a periodisation has been key to the identification of the real; it has allowed me to ascertain that changes in the real do not always translate into the empirical. The CPE conceptualisation of the



generative mechanisms of variation, selection and retention of an imaginary have allowed me to go some way in identifying the generative mechanisms which contributed to institutional change. What is more, in employing the analytical tool of periodisation to trace Thatcherism as an imaginary, I have been able to identify critical moments of variation, selection and retention to interpret how they contribute to the empirical institutional level of analysis.

### **7.3 Chapter conclusions:**

The overarching question in this dissertation was to *understand the changes that occurred in the British energy Market during (and to some extent, after) privatisation (1979-2007)*. Through employing the neo-institutionalist frameworks of institutional logic and institutional work, I have been able to chronologically identify changes that occurred in the energy market at a more micro level of discussion and analysis. The logics framework allowed for the identification of dominant and competing logics in the industry which gave some insight into the beliefs, values and norms which drove change at the exchange-field level and within the organisations (BG and CEGB). From the work perspective, I was able to identify the various categories of work (political technical and cultural) that occurred and at times did not, this aided the identification of organisational responses and attempts to change, maintain and disrupt institutions during the process of privatisation. The neo-institutional perspective enabled me to ascertain that the focal organisations of BG and the CEGB were able to maintain their nationalised identities and were as a result privatised natural monopolies. Throughout the period of 1979-2007, there was continuous contention between the national market logic and the private market logic; the latter gave rise to the managerial logic which enabled the focal organisations to become so

powerful and dominant within the industry. So much so, that we still BG as a dominant player in the market today.

Through my engagement with the CPE literature, I have been able to further the aforementioned institutional discussion of change. Whilst I was able to establish that idea of ownership, regulation and financialisation were crucial to institutional logics and work during the privatisation process; these ideas almost become suspended without the consideration of the macro, political and political ideological. Through the employment of the concept of the imaginary and in particular focusing upon Thatcherism as an imaginary, I have been able to participate in a more ethico-politically, political and socio-economic driven analysis and discussion of change. Jessop's periodisation of Thatcherism has allowed for the capturing of the general neoliberal regime shifts from 1965-2010 which has thus enabled me to produce a sector-specific periodisation of Thatcherism in relation to the energy industry. This has served to bridge the macro and micro levels of discussion and allowed me to demonstrate that the changes which occurred in the gas and electricity industries (through VSR), were politically driven. Thus any changing logics and work (as per the neo-institutional framework) become part of the hegemonic battle to implement and maintain the hegemonic organic ideology of the ruling class, in this case Thatcher and her new right agenda.

## Chapter 8: Conclusions, Contributions and Reflections

### 8.1 Contributions:

The overarching empirical goal of this dissertation was to *explain and understand the changes that occurred in the British energy Market during (and to some extent, after) privatisation*. The underlying key theoretical questions guiding this dissertation were:

**(RQ1)** What were the changing institutional logics and how were these changes enacted by key players within the market?

**(RQ2)** What imaginaries are present during the privatisation of the British energy sector and which imaginary is hegemonic?

**(RQ3)** What are the connections and/or disconnections in the theoretical and empirical accounts of neo-institutional and cultural political economy frameworks?

In this dissertation, I have developed an extended institutional account of the changes that occurred in the British energy market 1979-2010. I have done so by first elaborating a neo-institutionalist analytical framework focusing upon institutional logics and institutional work. Here, I drew upon neo-institutionalist theory as an established way in which institutional and organisational change can be understood. In particular, I have engaged with the work of Friedland and Alford (1991), Thornton and Ocasio (2008) and Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury (2012) to examine the ways in which institutional logics at the field level emerge and become dominant or compete at the exchange field level (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017). These latter points are

further developed by drawing on discussions of institutional work (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008; Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca, 2011). The institutional logics literature encourages the identification of key “environmental jolts” (Sine and David, 2003), which trigger moments of change. It also serves to identify the multiplicity of organisational responses to institutional logics (Greenwood *et al.*, 2010). Throughout this neo-institutional portions of this dissertation, I have traversed back and forth between the discussion of logics and work, foregrounding one over the other as both frameworks, whilst theoretically should complement one another, are often found in contention with one another given their prominence as established fields in their own right.

In applying the neo-institutional frameworks, I have found them to be useful for understanding change at a micro and micro-foundational level of analysis. Whilst these bodies of literature are useful for understanding change, as they prompt questions of *how*, *what* and to some extent *who* is involved in institutional change, some shortfalls do exist. Accounts of change are often conceived of in a linear fashion, and the analysis of structure and agency can often be in ontological contention. An explanation for this tendency emerges from the growth of this neo-institutionalist literature itself, as it has side-lined consideration of the ethico-political and political economy. This becomes apparent when exploring highly politicised organisational change, such as the British Gas sector that lies at the centre of my own study. From the neo-institutionalist perspective where, arguably, less insight is gained about the political economy and ideologies at play, thus paying less attention to key political actors, political programmes and so on, and how these interact with processes at the institutional and organisational level. Given the large-scale transformation of the industries and creation of competitive markets was widely

instigated by political actors and on the whole, politically driven; I found the neo-institutional frameworks did not go beyond recognising struggle and tension and only limitedly accounts for the changes on the political stage.

As the political realm is key to understanding the profound changes in the British gas and electricity industries; I drew on Sum and Jessop's (2013) Cultural Political Economy, including their critical discussion of the limits of the institutional turn, to develop an extended institutional approach. I made particular use of CPE's concept of the imaginary and the Gramscian concepts of hegemony, historical bloc and intellectuals in this approach (Gramsci, 1971). Through the recognition of the ethico-political and political economy, my dissertation draws upon some of the forgotten ideas of old institutionalism which took seriously the interplay of the macro and micro levels of discussion in organisational change (Parsons, 1956; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Selznick, 1996). CPE's appreciation of the relationality of structure and agency, as well as the role of intellectuals and imaginaries spurs a deepened understanding of the evolution of variation, selection and retention processes taking place in relation to institutional change. Considering *how* hegemony is produced and challenged and by *whom* allows this alternative and extended institutionalist approach sheds light upon the various battles occurring in the process of achieving institutionalisation.

Empirically, I have provided a multi-decade periodisation of the case of privatisation of the British gas and electricity industries in relation to the literature. The empirical story occurs in two parts, the first part of the empirical story adopts an institutionalist framework based on the Institutional Logics and Institutional Work literatures for understanding change in the British energy industries, from post-war period Britain to the early twenty-first century. The

second part of the empirical story demonstrates the benefit of the extended framework developed. It shows that while institutional change can be rapid and turbulent, policy-making may appear broadly unidirectional and stable. I find that whilst the intellectuals are concerned with creating efficiently competitive markets as per neoliberal thought, there are often greater battles regarding issues of ownership and ideology within institutional structures. My key concerns relate to the various ways in which political narratives were picked up, ignored, distorted or otherwise translated by institutional actors and how the interplay of the political and institutional afforded institutional actors scope to create and maintain the ensuing oligopolistic situation in spite of a political agenda that precisely aimed to avoid such a market environment. The metaphor of the hegemonic battlefield utilised when analysing change also aids the understanding of agentic power within institutional change. Key elite actors on the peripheral of organisational and institutional structures often did work relating to change, or from the perspective of the metaphor, engaged in hegemonic battles to ensure the dominance of an imaginary. This battleground is where both organic and traditional intellectuals become crucial and more so where traditional intellectuals traverse boundaries to become organic intellectuals.

Methodologically, I have utilised primary and secondary historical data and immersed myself in archival research and textual analysis of documents. With a continued, and to some extent renewed, concern with historical research methods; I situate my own research within the ever-growing body of literature concerning uses of the past. I also to contribute to this literature through the introduction of a wider set of units of analysis, both drawing from the institutional and CPE domains. From the institutional lens, these units of analysis are the multiple and competing logics

present during the privatisation process and the various forms of institutional work carried out by actors and organisations. From the CPE perspective, I draw upon the concept of the imaginary and its generative mechanism of variation, selection and retention to demonstrate the importance of the political realm to the understanding of change in highly politicised arenas. In particular, the use of periodisation as an analytical tool as well as a product of empirical analysis across these domains of literature helps bring these units of analysis into relation with one another.

## **8.2 Critical reflections, limitations and future research:**

The writing of the dissertation itself has been quite the undertaking in terms of scope and empirical timescales covered. This dissertation and the ideas presented within have been through many iterations and it has evolved so much from my original PhD proposal. I have come to value the research process, and the ‘craft’ of academic writing. My methodological approach has allowed me to immerse myself in my empirical context from a historical perspective and so I have engaged with large volumes of archival data which has at times led to my own issues of dealing with excess (Fellman and Popp, 2013). This excess was necessary at times, particularly given my contributions to the more processual discussion of change and the need to identify critical moments of variation for the study of change. To deal with this issue, I was conscious to iteratively move between data, existing research and my research questions continuously to ensure I remained focused, but also so that I was producing a narrative that was firstly true to the events which occurred, but also applied a new lens and perspective phenomenon. I am aware that I have been integral in constructing the narratives which have been presented and have thus influenced the dissertation in this way, but I have tried to provide some methodological clarity along the way.

In reflecting upon my experience working with my supervisory team, I must express my gratitude to them for allowing me the space and time to read, engage with and take the time to process the literature and ideas *I* was interested in. However, this freedom and *Appendix C* is an illustration of some of the conversations and brainstorming moments from a selection of my supervisory meetings. They reflect those periods of more abstract and concrete ideas that helped contribute to building this dissertation. There are clear moments of ‘messiness’ where ideas and concepts were in formation, but satisfyingly, there are evident moments of clarity (*see appendices C1.1-C1.6*).

There remains a lot of scope in the concept of the imaginary. I have applied the ethico-political imaginary conceptually in an historical context within this dissertation, but it should not be relegated to solely the discussion of historical cases. With the seismic shift in political, national and international landscapes of late, there are many avenues through which the concept of an imaginary can be applied theoretically and analytically. A key facet of this discussion are the ideas of imagined communities, communities imagined and imaged recoveries; with the growing interest in the notion of the political and its place in organisation studies, these concepts can have great merit in marrying and bridging the more ‘traditional’ organisation management concepts to those political science and cultural political economy disciplines. If I am to take lead from concepts already discussed, the changing political landscapes and thus its effects on organisations, economies, individuals and collective groups allow for the discussion of social imaginaries, imagined communities, creativity, unity and conflict in imaginaries. Taking note of Castoriadis’ ideas of instituted and instituting imaginaries, a more powerful discussion of existing structures and institutions in society, how they are accessed



and thus, how they are creatively engaged with and changed can have much relevance to current debates within the real and academic world. As I have previously mentioned, been a call for better consideration of the uses of the past in organisational studies. This mainly being highlighted by the recent special issue in Organization Studies wherein use and worth of history has been exemplified. There is scope to build upon this strong foundation and further engage and deepen the conversation regarding uses and treatment of the past in organisational studies. Here the concept of the imaginary is versatile enough to deal with history.

## **Appendix A: Research method, data collection and analysis**

### **A1: Archive biographies**

#### **A1.1: Kew National Archives:**

Type	Physical/online
General bio	The National Archives is a non-ministerial department. They are the official archive and publisher for the UK Government (England and Wales). The archive is described as ‘a cultural, academic and heritage institution’ (The National Archives, 2018). The National Archive was created in 2003 by combining the Public Record Office and the Historical Manuscripts Commission
Who curates the archive	A collective effort- various boards are involved in the process of curation. The experts working within the National Archives are described as fulfilling a leadership role for the archive sector in

	working towards securing the preservation of physical and digital records.
Types of documents	<p>More generally, the archive houses over 11 million historical and governmental public records. For the purpose of my data collection, I focused upon collecting reports (official-organisational &amp; governmental);</p> <p>Media clippings; Meeting minutes; PREM documents;</p> <p>Governmental Q&amp;A sessions; Organisational correspondence; Governmental correspondence. The collection includes paper, parchment, digital files, websites, multimedia and artistic works.</p>
Availability of data	Publicly available. Collections are accessed via an online catalogue, some more popular documents have been digitized
Narrative of the archive	The National Archives describe themselves as a ‘non-ministerial department’ and ‘the guardians’ of over 1,000 years of national documents (The National Archives, 2018). The fact that this archive is a non-ministerial department suggests that there is little to no political interference in the preservation of records. However, the National Archive does still have to report to the Minister of State (usually a more junior minister) for digital policy.
How I approached the archive and how I chose my data	Given the vast nature of this archive, my approach to the archive varied throughout the data collection process. During my initial visits to the archives, the theoretical parts of my thesis were still under development and as a result, my data collection process reflected this as they were more exploratory and allowed me to get to grips with the type of data available, which data might be of most use to me and indeed, how I could possibly use the data within the theoretical parameters of the thesis. After initial visits, I would go back to desk research and theoretical refinement, and as the data collection process went on, my searches became

	<p>more specific and tailored to the periods, organisations and agents of interest.</p>
<p>How I safeguarded myself (against silence and availability)</p>	<p>Throughout my data collection I kept a research diary to record all my searches and number of results and type of results I got. I also kept note of all the records and files I consulted to avoid duplication, and to also make note of any files worth revisiting in the future. Whilst the archive is described as a non-ministerial department, I was conscious that there would still be some kind of government interaction in the curation of the archive. All the files I consulted were once confidential and with the passage of time have become publicly available, and I felt confident that those curating the archive were objective (they are constantly visible within the archive actually preserving or digitizing records). I did however become more aware as the data collection process went on that I was mainly collecting documents that represented the Conservative Party voice, and that opposition parties were not visible in the same way or as frequently. To safeguard myself against this, I followed the idea of triangulation in archival data collection and consulted multiple sources around similar times and time periods to understand multiple perspectives.</p>

## A1.2: London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)

Type	Physical/online
General bio	The London Metropolitan Archive is owned and funded by the City of London Corporation.
Who curates the archive	LMA holds the responsibility for curating their archive, but in keeping with their community engaging mission statement; LMA accepts and encourages the efforts of volunteers in providing customer services within the archive, caring for the archive and its documents, and also in the curation and preservation of historical documents.
Types of documents	The archive houses a range of documents, images, maps, films and books about London.
Availability of data	Publicly available, the LMA website states their archive ‘is free to use and open to everyone’ (LMA, 2018).
Narrative of the archive	Their mission state they are ‘London’s archive service, collecting, preserving, celebrating and sharing the stories of London and Londoners and its many communities through collaboration, innovation and learning’ (LMA, 2018)
How I approached the archive and how I chose my data	Knowing that the archive was very much concerned with the London, the community and individuals within this community, I used this archival visit to collect data concerning society and the consumer. I restricted my search with key dates from my periods, broadly 1980-2010, and more specifically to search specific periods e.g. 1982-1987. I then used more broad key terms such as ‘privatisation’ ‘regulation’; ‘regulatory bodies’ and ‘consumers’ because I recognized that the collection available in LMA is not as vast and diverse as The National Archives. Throughout my data collection I kept a research diary

	to record all my searches and number of results and type of results.
How I safeguarded myself (against silence and availability)	The Archive is based in London and so mainly concerns the people and city of London. Remembering this throughout the data collection process was crucial as I had to ensure I did not generalize the findings in the documents I collected as to British nation as a whole. The archive gave a voice to consumers based within London communities, and whilst some of the ideas and sentiments expressed in the documents collected were expressed by the nation as a whole, some more specific details regarding prices and perspectives were perhaps not always aligned to the views of consumers in the North of the nation.

### A1.3: National Grid Archive (National Gas Archive)

Type	Physical
General bio	The National Gas Archive runs in partnership with the North West Historical Society
Who curates the archive	The archive is curated by volunteers from the North West Historical Society. The society is a non-profit making group comprised of ex-employees of the National Grid (and organisations related to the industry). The volunteers who curate the archive have background knowledge of the business and industry.
Types of documents	<p>‘The NGA holds up to two kilometres of records covering the history and development of the UK gas industry’ (National Grid, 2019).</p> <p>The records date from 1812 to present and include financial, legal, technical, property and personnel records from the industry. The archive also houses records relating to the committee minutes of the Gas Council and BG</p>
Availability of data	Publicly available, permission needed to enter the archive. A brief outlining of research and the need for data required by the archivists. Whilst the archive relates to the National Grid which encompasses electricity, gas and related communications, the vast majority of the collection houses documents for the gas industry.
How I approached the archive and how I chose my data	Before entering the archive I had multiple conversations with some of the archivists. The archivists were interested in my research project and helped me gauge the general availability of relevant data within the archive. They produced an initial list of key data based upon some of my key search terms to help me start my data collection process. Once in the archive, I began with the curated list but also deviated from this list and conducted my own searches. As this archive was smaller, I also

	spent some time exploring the shelves of documented for a more serendipitous search process.
How I safeguarded myself (against silence and availability)	Throughout the data collection process I maintained a research diary. Initially allowed myself to be guided by the list of data curated by the archivists. Once I had exhausted this list, I began my own search process and engaged in conversations with various archivists present to gauge the type of additional data I could find and where I could find it.

#### A1.4: Margaret Thatcher Foundation

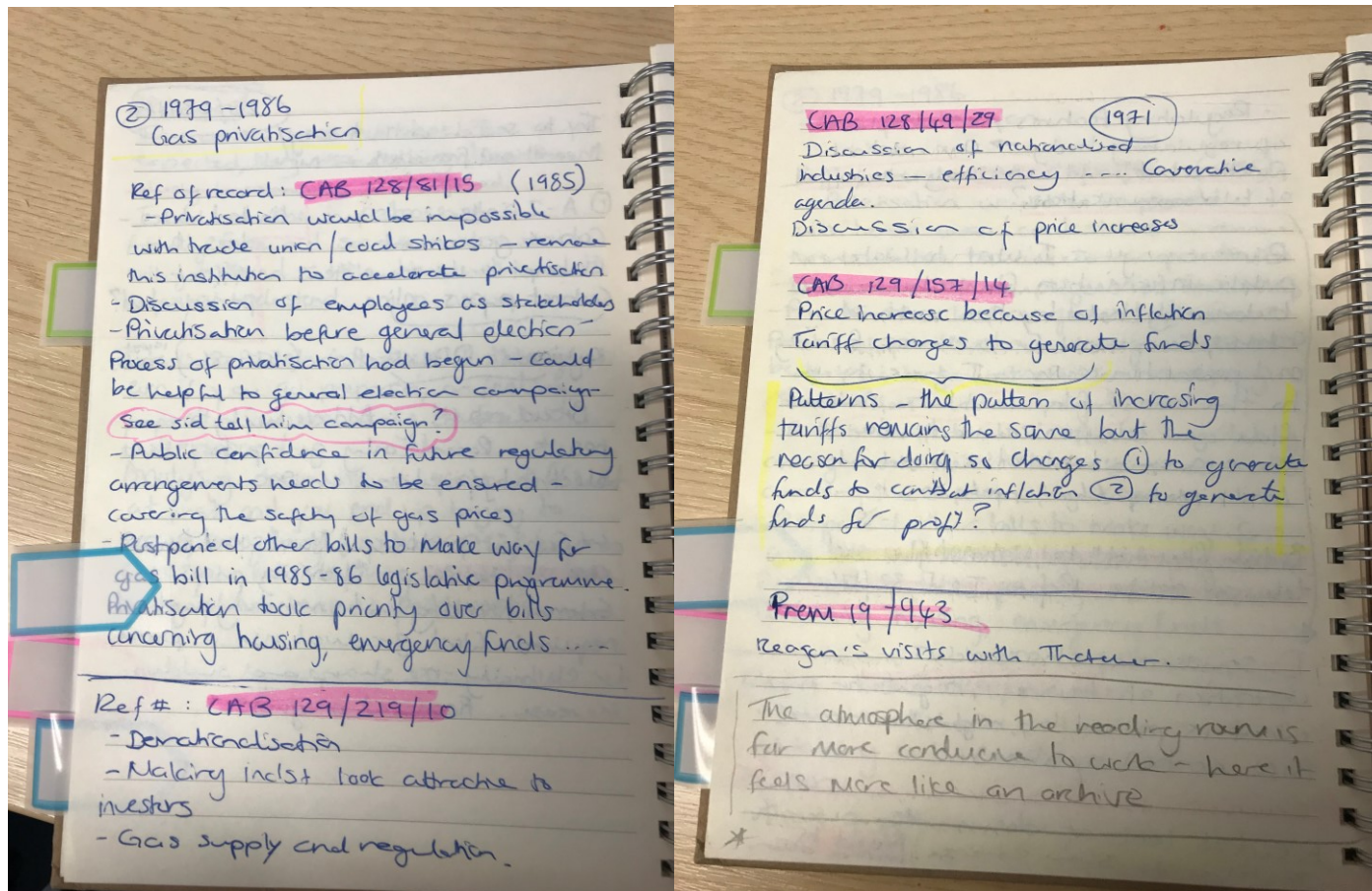
Type	Online
General bio	<p>The Churchill College (Thatcher papers)/ Churchill Archive Centre and the Margaret Thatcher Archive Trust work in conjunction with the Margaret Thatcher Foundation. The Margaret Thatcher Foundation describe themselves as ‘the largest contemporary history site of its kind’ which offers ‘free access to thousands of documents-many of them previously unpublished- relating to Margaret Thatcher and world events during the last thirty years’ (Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 2018b). As well as the archive, the website also offers a complete list of every public statement made by Thatcher 1945-1990, multimedia from both British and American sources, a chronological timeline of Thatcher’s life and career and finally a commentary section which provides secondary sources from the press, academic journals and general literature surrounding Margaret Thatcher. Within this commentary section, the Foundation highlights that all commentary sources are ‘written from all manner of perspectives and, of course, their contents do not express the views of the Foundation’ (Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 2018b).</p>
Who curates the archive	<p>The Foundation raises fund through private philanthropy. Some of this collection were curated and archived by the Churchill Archives Centre. The Churchill Archives Centre holds a collection of over 1 million documents pertaining to Margaret Thatcher) (from early childhood to the end of her life). The documents are in the written form, as well as audio, video and photographs. As part of their endeavour to digitize the collection, the Churchill Archive Centre and the Margaret Thatcher Archive Trust are still in the process of digitizing some of these documents, those items that have been successfully</p>



	digitized are then placed online at the Margaret Thatcher Foundation website.
Types of documents	Political papers from Thatcher's early years to the end of her premiership; photographs, audio and video from public and private events; Speeches and interviews; and press cuttings.
Availability of data	Publicly available when placed on the Margaret Thatcher Foundation website, but as the Churchill Archive Centre and the Margaret Thatcher Archive Trust are still in the process of digitizing some documents; some documents remain inaccessible online.
Narrative of the archive	The Foundation was formed in 1991 to 'advance the cause of political and economic freedom' (Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 2018a). The Foundation itself seems to promote what could be determined as Neoliberal goals. They state their main goals which are to: promote democracy, market principles, the rule of law and strong defense; to encourage links between Britain, Europe and North America; Foster greater connections between the Western world and the Middle East; and to further free trade throughout the world.
How I approached the archive and how I chose my data	I began to engage this archive further into my data collection and research project as a whole. Once I determined that Thatcherism is a political imaginary, and periodised this imaginary accordingly, I began to approach this archive from the specific periods of my periodisation. Initially I did some exploratory research in the archive to get a sense of the type of documents available to the corresponding periods, my data collection then became more focused when I began trying to capture the key narrative or hegemony presented by Thatcherism as the imaginary. This is when I began to pick up on key speeches and events as recorded by secondary sources, and as per my own data collection needs.

How I safeguarded myself (against silence and availability)	Throughout my data collection I kept a research diary to record all my searches and number of results and type of results. I was conscious throughout that this archive is funded and curated by individuals who are more likely to be pro-Thatcher and pro Conservative governments.
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## A2: Research diary



## Appendix B: Periodisations of Thatcherism

### B1: Common representations of Thatcherism

Type	Source of periodisation	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is periodised	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is represented
(Online) Archives	Margaret Thatcher Foundation- Online archive of historical documents relating to the Thatcher period	1925-1944 Early life 1945-1970 Early career 1970-1975 Cabinet rank 1975-1979 Leader of the opposition 1979-1990 Prime Minister Since 1991 Post-premiership Pre-1979 Pre-premiership	<p>The Margaret Thatcher Foundation describes itself as a non-profit organisation that seeks to advance the cause of political and economic freedom, the foundation very much appears to be built upon the ethos of Thatcher.</p> <p>‘The Foundation has pursued an innovative and imaginative educational program. Drawing on Lady Thatcher’s worldwide standing and expertise, it raised funds and helped to finance projects promoting Western business, legal, and technical education, particularly in former communist countries. It has collaborated with charities, schools, universities, and major cultural institutions, such as the Library of Congress’ (Margaret</p>

Type	Source of periodisation	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is periodised	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is represented
			Thatcher Foundation, 2018a).
	The Thatcher Papers (Churchill College Cambridge)- Online archive containing over 1 million documents from Thatcher's childhood till the end of her life	<p>1964-1970 Backbench career</p> <p>1970-1974 Education Secretary</p> <p>1974-1975 Campaign for party leadership</p> <p>1975-1990 Leader of the Conservative party</p> <p>1975-1979 Leader of the opposition</p> <p>1949-1980 Press cutting collection</p> <p>*Less organised in terms of archival collection, but the website does include a biography sections and it arranged as follows:</p> <p>Early life and career</p> <p>1959-1975 Political life</p>	<p>Minimal direct discussion of Thatcherism as an ideology.</p> <p>The Thatcher collection is presented with pride. The collection is described as 'the largest and most significant of late twentieth century political archives' and there is reference to the physical space that the archive documents take up, 'the archive contains over 1 million documents in nearly three thousand archive boxes currently occupying around 300 meters of shelving' (College, 2018).</p>

Type	Source of periodisation	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is periodised	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is represented
		1979-1990 Premiership	
Academic literature	Kavanagh (2002)'Thatcherism and British Politics: The end of consensus?'	<p>Consensus politics- Post-war political consensus and policy settlement.</p> <p>Consensus questioned-The roles of groups and policy-brokers who worked to challenge and undermine the consensus.</p> <p>A new right- The ideas and groups which challenged the consensus helped create the neo-liberal wing of the Conservative party.</p> <p>Breakdown- Of the consensus, shifts in Labour and Conservative parties discussed and Thatcher story</p>	<p>Thatcherism used in three different contexts. The first refers to Thatcher's leadership style and hostility towards the emphasis placed upon achieving agreement/hegemony by consensus.</p> <p>The second use of Thatcherism refers to a set of policies designed to produce a strong state, strong government and free economy.</p> <p>The third usage refers to the international reaction against high inflation, trade union militancy and un-governability- popular support for the welfare state.</p> <p>The idea that the terms 'Thatcherism', 'monetarism' and the 'New</p>

Type	Source of periodisation	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is periodised	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is represented
		becomes more prominent.	Right' are often used interchangeably as if they were the same thing (Kavanagh, 2002).
	Jackson and Saunders, (2012) 'Making Thatcher's Britain'	'The grocer's daughter' 1979-1983 'The first term: Back from the brink' 1983-1987 'The second term: High Thatcherism' 1987-1990 'The third term: Decline and fall'	The Thatcher effect- 'One of Thatcher's most striking characteristics was her capacity to inflame the imagination' (Jackson and Saunders. 2012:10). Here there is a focus upon gender, personality & character (general governing style). Thatcherism and hegemony- Thatcherism as an ideological project from a Marxist perspective, as well as a British Conservative perspective (Jackson and Saunders, 2012).
	Jessop (2015) 'Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherism: Dead but not buried'	1979-1982 'Consolidation efforts'	Jessop provides a subjective but meaningful interpretation of Thatcherism. The periodisation presented by

Type	Source of periodisation	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is periodised	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is represented
		1982-1987 ‘Consolidated Thatcherism’  1988-1990 ‘Blowback and the decomposition of radical Thatcherism’  1990-1997 ‘Thatcherism with a grey face’  1997-2010 ‘Thatcherism with a Christian socialist face’	Jessop operates on a general/aggregate level of analysis. While it does refer to specific actors, issues, strategies contexts and temporal constraints, which goes some way in discussing Thatcherism as a specific economic, social and political project (Jessop, 2007; 2015), it does not explore the sector-specific politics and effects of Thatcherism.
	Crines, Heppell and Dorey (2016) ‘The political rhetoric and oratory of Margaret Thatcher’	1959-1975 From backbencher to cabinet minister  1975-1979 Leader of the opposition  1979-1990 Prime Minister  Post-1990 Former Prime Minister	A linguistic, symbolic and ideological representation of Thatcher. This text is very much concerned with the key speeches, interviews, appearances etc. during Thatcher’s career and the implication this has upon political party leadership, and also the way in which ideology was presented to the world.  There is discussion of the way in which Thatcherism

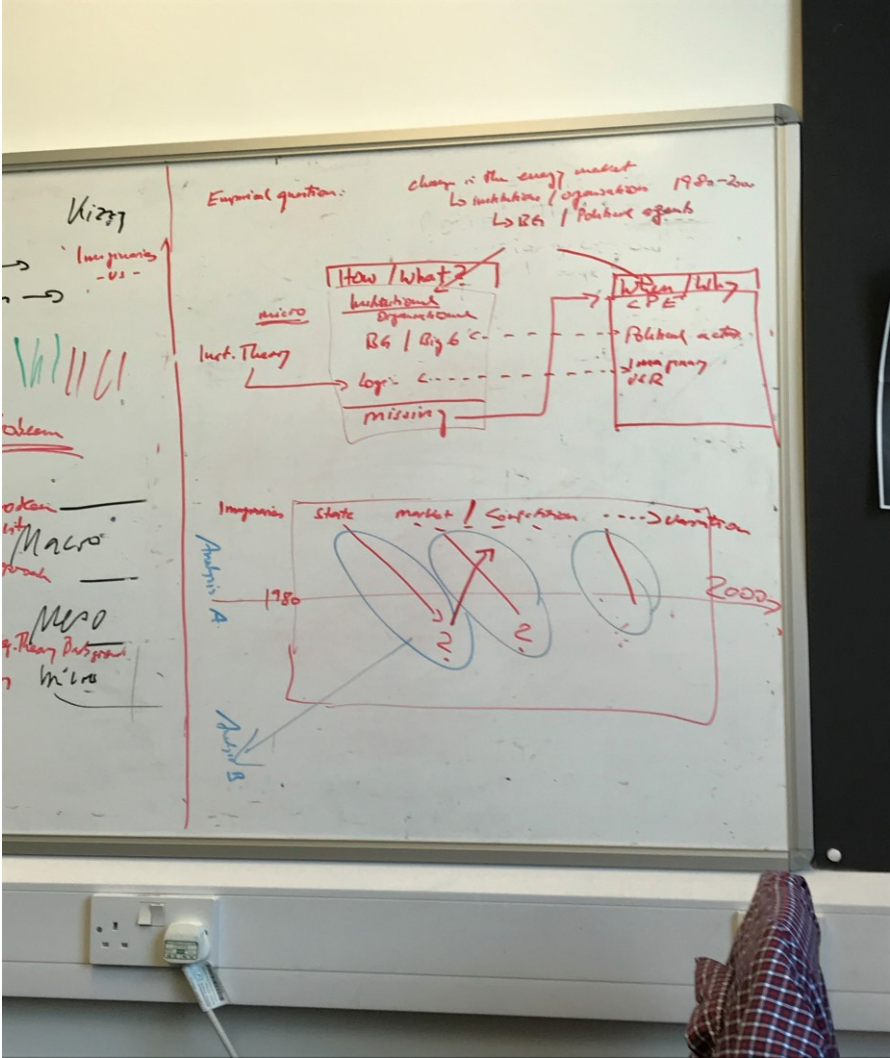


Type	Source of periodisation	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is periodised	How Thatcher/Thatcherism is represented
			<p>can be interpreted whether this be ideological, electoral, personality-based interpretations.</p> <p>The argument that Thatcher herself is central to justifying Thatcherism- through her rhetoric and oratory (Crines, Heppell and Dorey, 2016).</p>

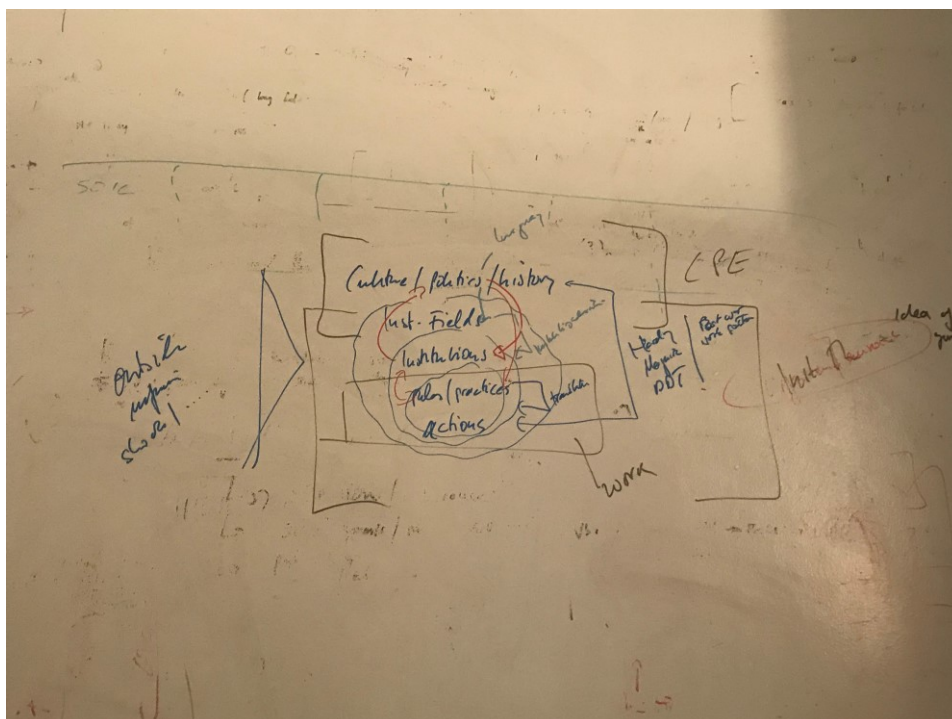
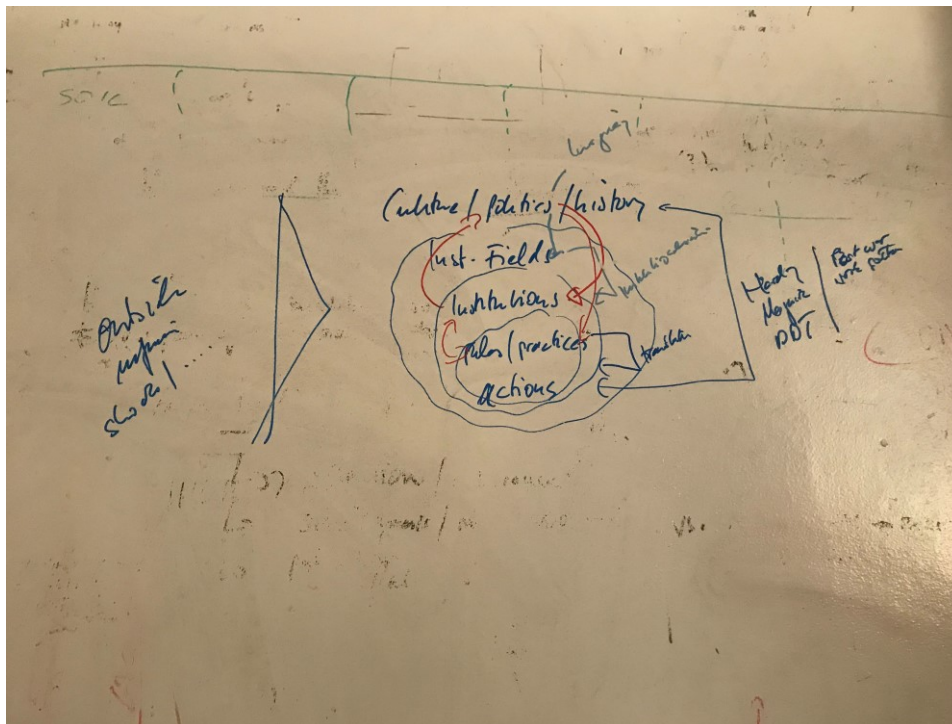
Appendix C: Reflections

C1: The evolution of the thesis illustrated through supervisory meetings

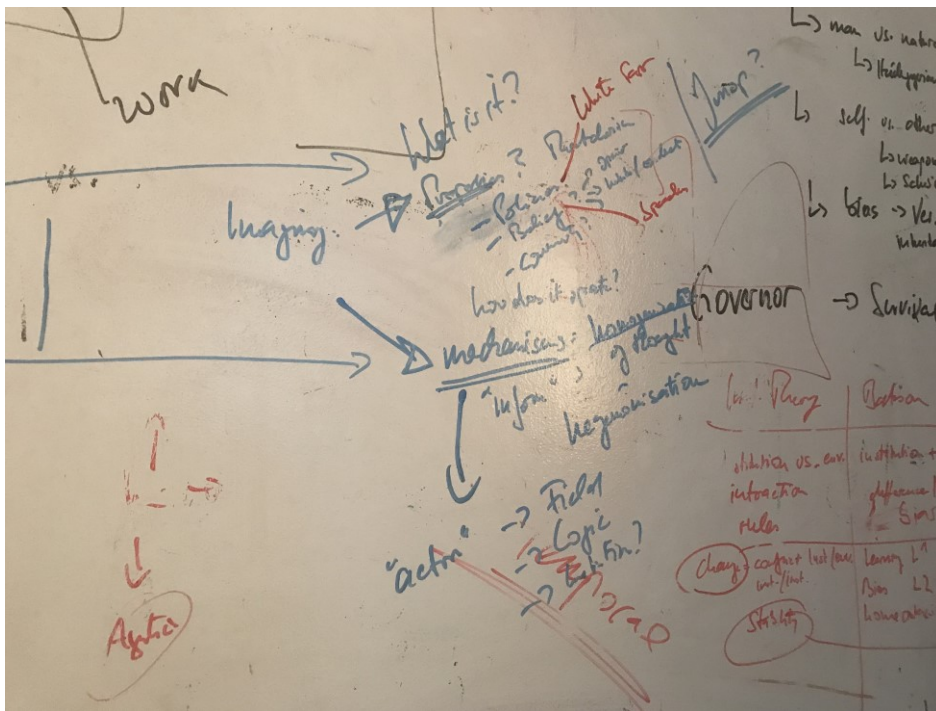
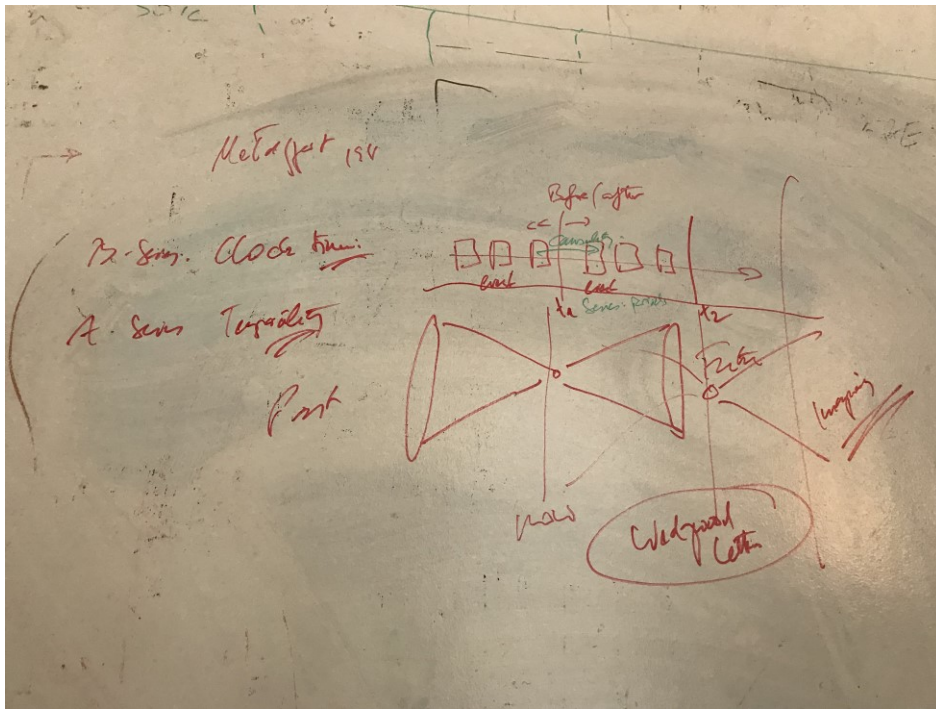
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C1.2:18 December 2017

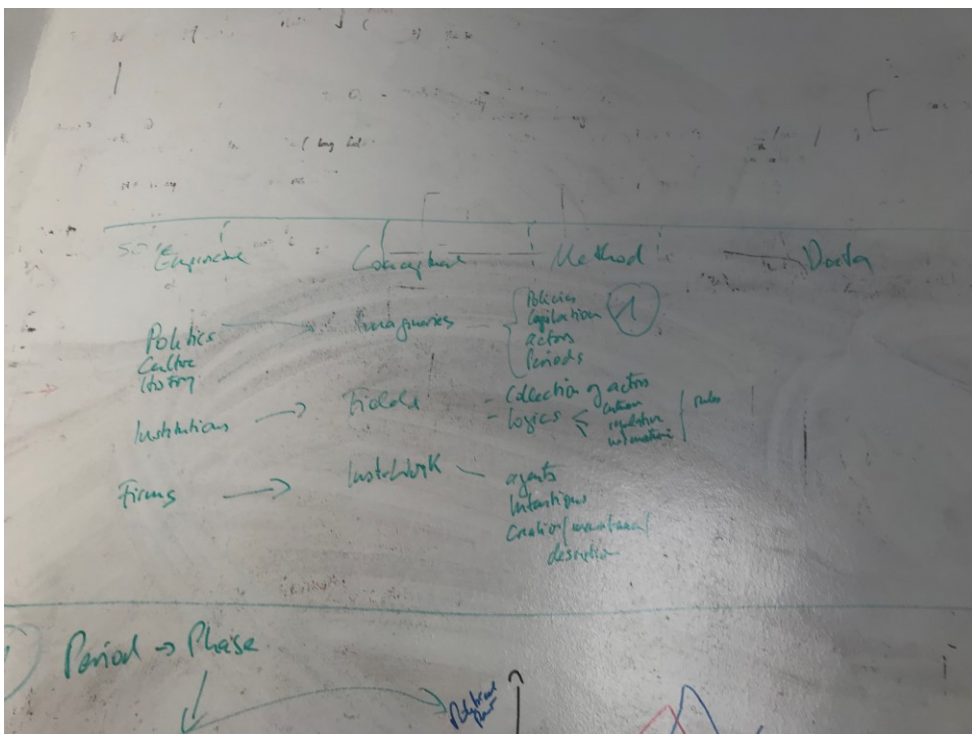
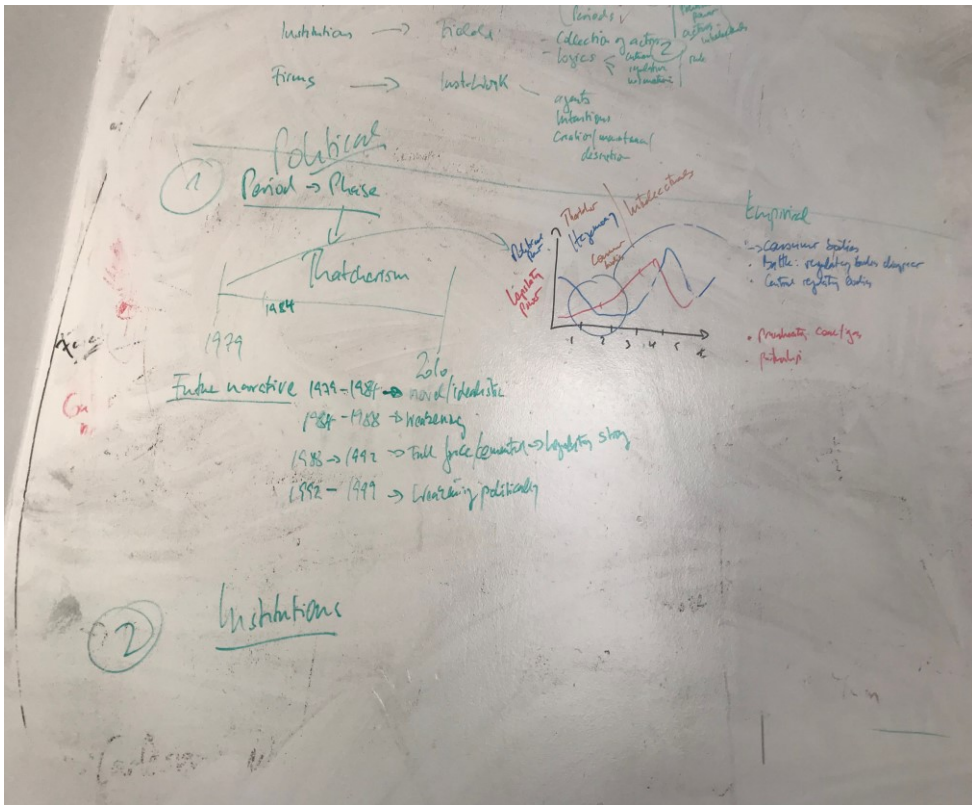


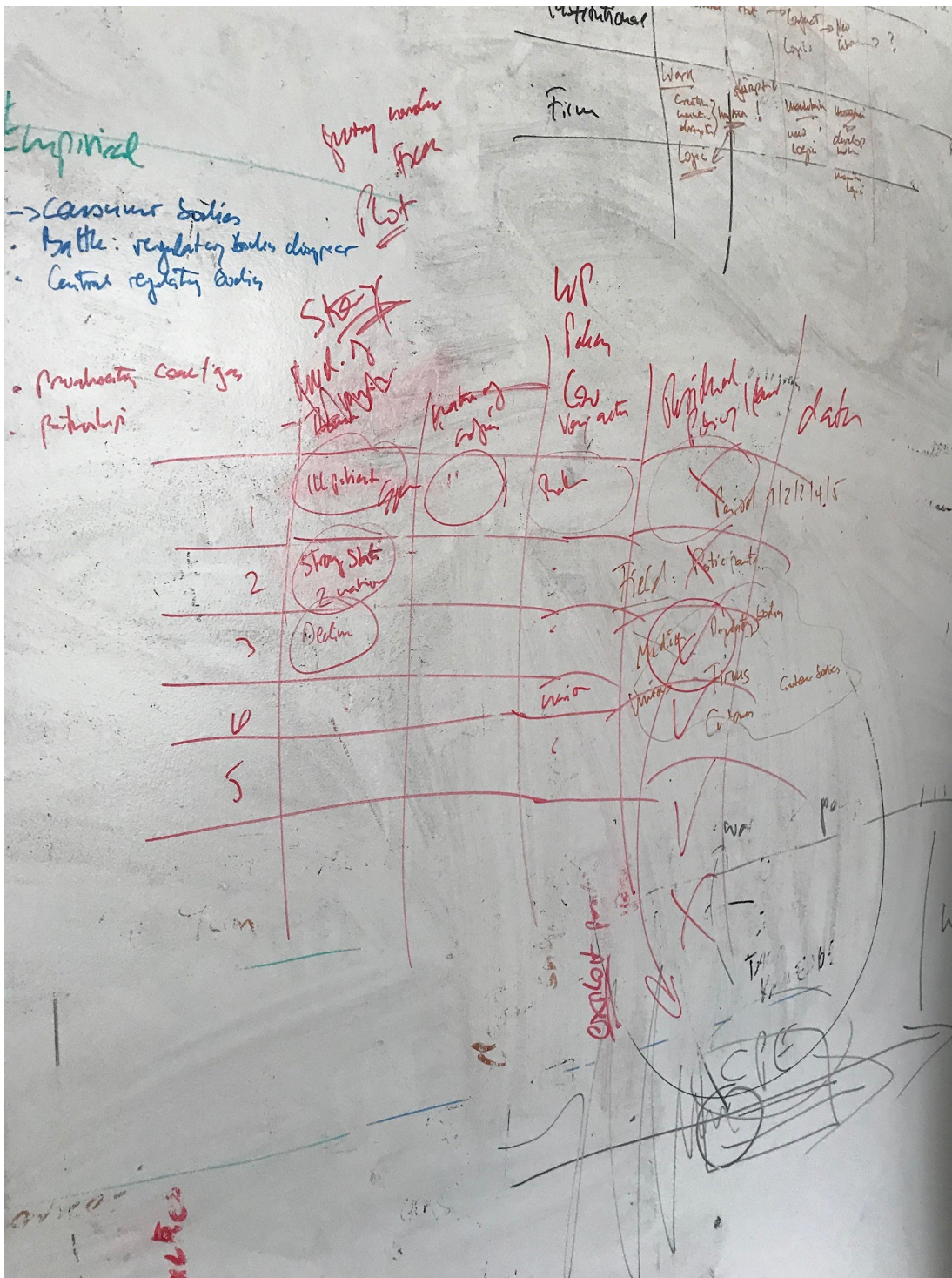
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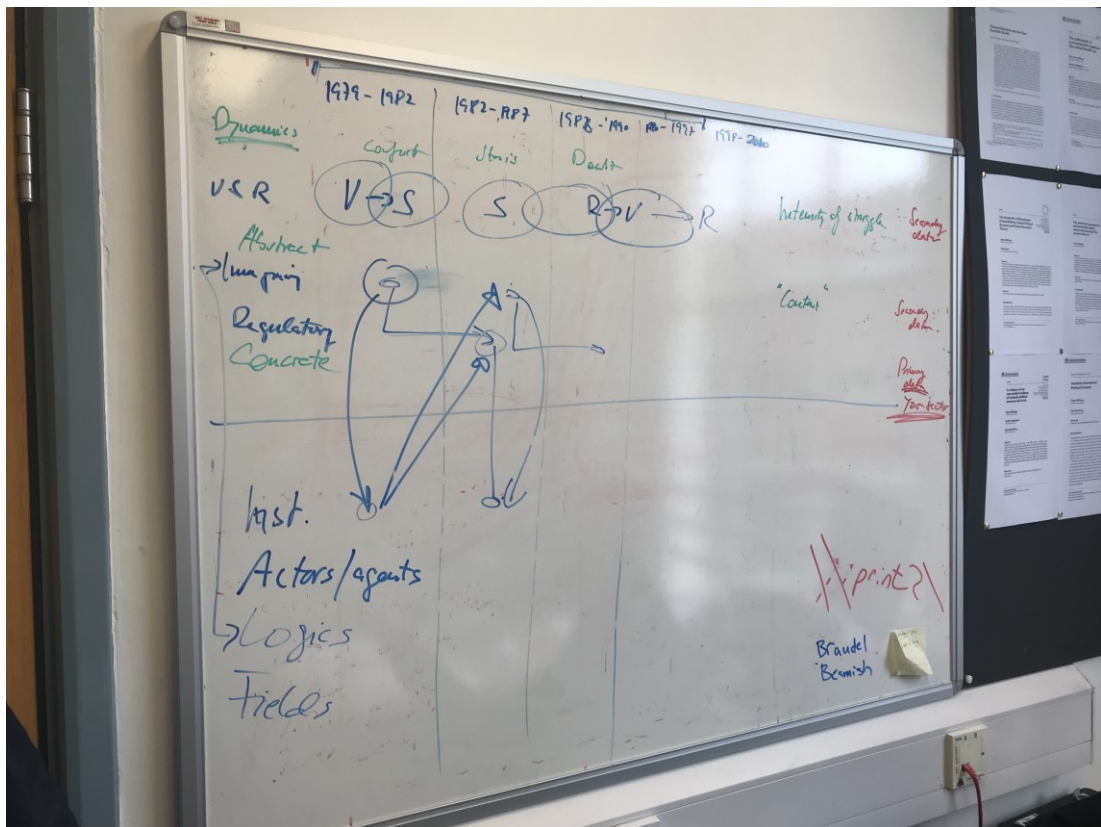
C1.4: 26 March 2018







C1.6: 11 May 2018



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legislation, party manifestos and internal organisation documents**

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