Structuration theory

Hani
• Social theory
• Relates to the creation and reproduction of social systems
• Based in the analysis of both “structure” and “agents” (see structure and agency):
• Abstract characteristics of social relations
• Structuration focuses on structure rather than production
• Agents as active participants.
• It was proposed by sociologist Anthony Giddens in “The Constitution of Society”

• *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* (1971) and *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies* (1981) are two useful books that summarize classical theory very well.

• *The Constitution of Society* (1984) is a more theoretical book that presents and develops his structuration theory.
• the term *structure* refers to the “systemic form” or structuring properties allowing the 'binding' of time-space in social systems“/ rules and resources.

• "Duality of structure: Structure is both medium (agent, social practice) and outcome of reproduction of practices.

For Giddens, structure refers to practices which are structured along certain lines. These are:

- **Procedural rules** – how the practice is performed. Ethnomethodology analyzes such rules.
- **Moral rules** – appropriate ways/forms of enactment of social action: Laws, what is permissible and what is not.
- **Material resources** – allocation of resources among activities and members of society. Means of production, commodities, income, consumer and capital goods.
- **Resources of authority**. Formal organizations, how time and space are organized, production and reproduction, social mobility, legitimacy and authority.
• social structures contain agents and/or are the product of past actions of agents.

• Giddens holds this duality, alongside "structure" and "system," as the core of structuration theory.

• Situates such structures in human practice

• agents and structures mutually enact social systems, and social systems in turn become part of that duality.
• In examining social systems, structuration theory examines “structure”, “interaction” and “modality”
• The "modality" of a structural system is the means by which structures are translated into actions.
• Interaction is the agent's activity within the social system (time and space)

• "Frames" are "clusters of rules which help to constitute and regulate activities, defining them as activities of a certain sort and as subject to a given range of sanctions.

• Framing is the practice by which agents make sense of what they are doing. "What is going on here?"

• Makes everyday actions have some degree of predictability
• Structuration theory is concerned with “order” in human social relationships
• Routinization for reproduction of social systems
• Routinized social practices do not stem from coincidence, "but the skilled accomplishments of knowledgeable agents
• Structures and agents are both internal and external to each other, and continually changing each other

• [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HClt1561gu8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HClt1561gu8)

Nick Herriman, author of Entangled State, www.yale.edu/seas/EntangledState.htm. In the "25 Concepts in Anthropology" series, presenting what is thought to be the 25 most important concepts in socio-cultural anthropology. Each concept provides a unique insight into what it is to be human. This episode concerns the concepts of "structure" and "agency"
Criticism

• Strong structuration
• Micro-level activities vs Macro-level explanations
• Multiplicity of changes in the patterns of the network’s actors agency and interactions
• Contradictions & conflicts within a network
  (Walsham, 2002)