It's often talked about as micro, being the smallest scale, meso, and macro. A lot of social sciences choose to use that language to focus on different elements of a social phenomenon.

One of the best theorists of the 20th century is a man named Tony Giddens and he developed a theory that he called *structuration*. In his argument, which sounds very abstract but, in fact, is quite powerful, is that we have these big realms of structuration that explains social structure. He calls those structures of *domination*, *legitimation* and *signification* (if you move across the top of the diagram there).

Structures of legitimation are the norms and the procedures. As we sit here in this room, it is defined by certain rules. Some of the rules are: you're the audience and I'm the speaker. So, you don't try to talk at the same time that I talk. We all understand that rule and we live by it. One is that I'm the teacher and you're a student. Another framework is that we're in a classroom. Another framework is that we're recording this, so we had a lot of discussion about which particular rules. They're not as established. They're not as clear; but we decided which rules we're going to operate on. We're going to pause, you're going to speak. It's right here.

Those kinds of rules that we're enacting—and that's down at this very micro level—in the conversations that we're having are embedded in a broader framework which is the educational system and which specifies what kind of conduct goes on and it has rules and regulations which we can't break. We have some variance here, but there are things that we can't do based on those regulations and things that we have to do based on those regulations, which we're all subject to inside a university.

Then, that's embedded in broader frameworks of rules and regulations. Some of them are, as I said before, quite cultural. S,o then you flip over to something like structures of signification. A hundred years ago, we would have probably all, in Canada, or I'd say 150 years ago, most of us would have practiced only a few variances of religious belief. It would have been very important to us. Our conduct and our values would have been very controlled by that. We would, as well, have felt that when we were interacting with each other, we had to enact those beliefs of respects, of values, et cetera. That changes over time.

We're also being constrained by certain kinds of economic realities and certain kinds of legal realities and certain kinds of authority realities.

What Giddens was so insightful about was that all of those assumptions are right here in this room. So, we carry with us our notions of what's legal and illegal, right and wrong, good and bad, who has power and who doesn't, and we enact them. So, if someone were to sit here and study us as if we were an animal species and they were staying outside and they were from Mars, they could tell a lot about this culture's distribution of authority and power. They could tell a lot about where the resources went to or didn't go. They could tell a lot about what beliefs we held and they could tell a lot about our norms and regimes right from that.

His argument was that we are all constrained by these things but, ultimately, we created them; but doesn't feel like we've created them. You and I don't feel like we created the laws. They just act on us. But human beings like us *did* create those laws. We didn't create the economic system. We don't feel like we did, but in fact we did. So, we are constrained by it and it affects how we interact in real time but we all have the

capacity to change it and over time we *do* change it.

This [recording in a classroom] would not have happened 100 years ago in any university. We would not be recording for example, some technological changes. We would have a different pattern of interacting. You would see me differently; I would see you differently. All those things do shift and that means that people have made choices, individuals like you or me, over time, to in a sense do it differently.

Based on other choices that were happening and the emerging pattern, some of those choices would stick and combine with other novelty and new things to begin to change that meso level which is what our university is like.

Those, in turn begin, to change these broader systems. So you can change it but you're also inhibited by it. When we talk about scale or the concept of scale here, we're actually going from what we can observe and see at just an interactional level all the way up to what's enshrined in our culture and our big institutions.

The question when we're talking about transforming that system is: *where do we intervene?* Do we try to change something that's happening right here in this room? Will that have the greatest impact? Do we try to change something that's happening in this university? Will that have the greatest impact? Do we try to change legislation about universities altogether?

It depends on what your problem is. It depends on what your problem is, where you could intervene. I'm going to come back to that in just a second.

WATERLOO INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE