



Higher education management and leadership from the institutional logics perspective

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Structure

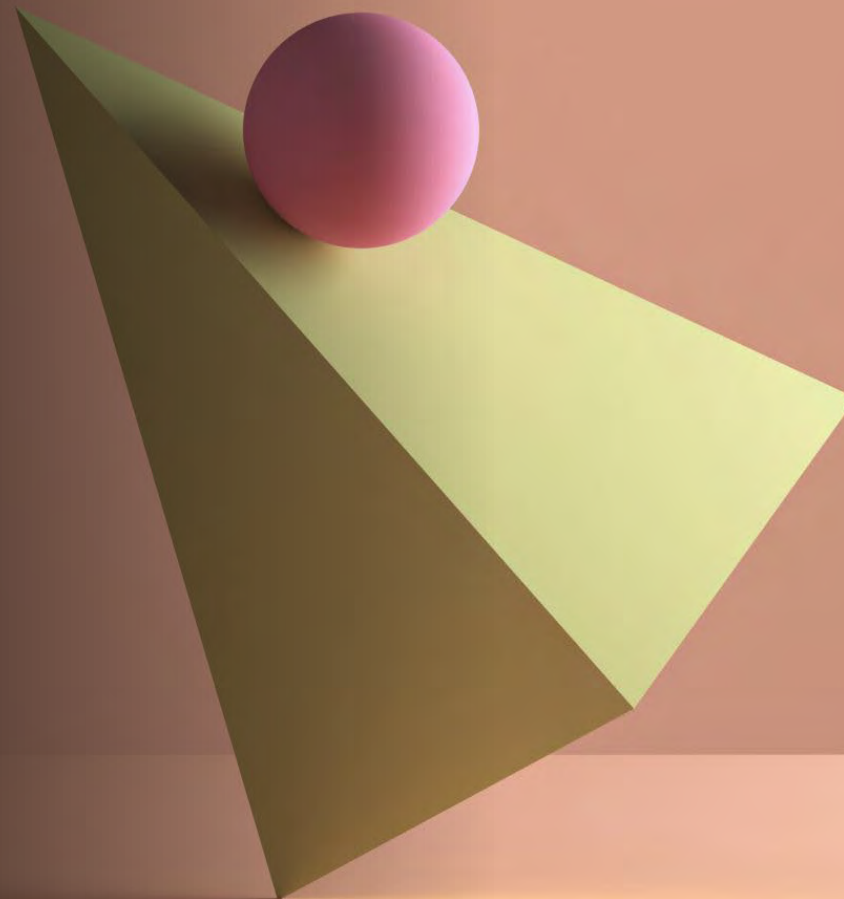
The concept of institutional logics

Relating higher education management and leadership to institutional logics

Approaches of institutional logics analysis



What are institutional logics?



Institutional logics and institutional theory

- Institutional logics is a sub-field of institutional theory.
- How social orders merge, maintain and change makes up the institutional theory, concerning relations between actors (organisational and individual) and institutional environment.
- Institutions are social structures and social norms that organisations widely recognise and accept as established ways of doing things in a given field, such as a higher education system.
- Institutional logics concretizes the abstract concept of the institution by identifying a set of supra-organisational patterns that provide meaning to actions and conflicts.





Definition of institutional logics

- Institutional logics are ‘the constellation of beliefs and associated practices (the schemas and scripts) that a field’s participants hold in common’ (Owen-Smith and Powell, 2008, p. 600).
- ‘Institutional logics comprise a set of implicit rules of the game that regulate which issues, strategic contingencies, or problems become important in the political struggle among actors in organizations’ (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999, p. 806).
- Institutional logic include both ‘material practices and symbolic constructions’ (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 248).
- Institutional logic can be simply understood as ‘organising principle’ (Friedland & Alford, 1991) that guide organisational and individual behaviour.

Classic formulation of institutional logics (Based on Western societies)



Five logics identified by Alford and Friedland (1985, 1991): the bureaucratic state, the capitalist **market**, the nuclear **family**, **democracy**, and **religion** (in the form of Christianity).

Six logics identified by Thornton (2004): the state, the market, the family, religion, the profession, and the corporation (Adding **profession** and **corporation** logics but dropping out the democracy logic from Alford and Friedland).

Seven logics by Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury (2012): adding **community** logic


A state logic can be categorised as either democratic (in which decisions are made through voting) or bureaucratic (in which decisions are rationalized and regulated). (Zheng, Shen & Cai, 2018)



Core value of institutional logics perspective

It provides a very useful lens to observe complex institutional environments; multiple and contending logics provide the dynamic for potential change/innovation in both organisations and societies.

It helps better understand the “paradox of embedded agency” (Seo and Creed 2002): if the actions of organisational actors are constrained by taken-for-granted institutions, how and why can the actors induce institutional changes?



Organisational field vs institutional system

- An institutional system may cut across several organisational fields (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury 2012).
- Second, an organisational field is characterised by a structuration that results in less diversity (Dimaggio and Powell 1983), whereas an institutional system is comprised of mingling and conflicting institutional logics (Thornton et al. 2012).

(Cai and Liu, 2020)

Subfields of institutional theory

- Old institutionalism (e.g. Selznick, 1949, 1952, 1957)
- Neo-institutionalism (e.g. Meyer, 1977; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)
- Institutional entrepreneurship (e.g. DiMaggio, 1988; Battilana, et al., 2009)
- Institutional work Lawrence and (e.g. Suddaby, 2006)
- Institutional logics (e.g. Alford and Friedland, 1985, 1991; Thornton and Ocasio, 1999; Thornton, et al., 2012)

THE USE OF INSTITUTIONAL THEORY IN HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

Yuzhuo Cai and Yohannes Mehari

ABSTRACT

Institutional theory has arguably become a popular and powerful explanatory tool for studying various organisational issues, including those in the context of higher education. However, little is known about the efforts of higher education researchers in tracing the development of organisational institutionalism and applying the theory in their research for a better understanding of the nature of universities and colleges. The purpose of this chapter is thus to fill the gaps by analysing nine leading higher education journals. The results indicate that the application of institutional theory in higher education research is dominated by the concepts of new institutionalism developed in the 1970s and 1980s. In spite of a growing tendency to utilise the recently developed insights of institutional theory in higher education studies, the full potential of institutional theory has not been fully exploited by higher education researchers. We therefore propose some directions for further institutional analysis in higher education studies.

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Relating higher education management and leadership to institutional logics



Management and leadership

- Management deals with responsibility, implementation, proper function and approaches to attain an organizational goal
- Leadership engages with values, purpose and influence
- Modern organizations require both management and leadership
- Managers and leaders can take on mixed roles

(Ruan, Cai and Stensaker, 2023)



Leadership and Management

- Leadership is about doing the right things
- Management about doing things right

Peter Drucker



In an organization, such as a firm, where a single institutional logic dominates, it is relatively straightforward to agree on the importance of "doing the right things" and "doing things right."

In an organization such as a university, where different institutional logics mingle and even compete, it can be challenging to achieve consensus on what constitutes "doing the right things" and "doing things right."



Unique features of universities (Pinheiro, 2011)

1. long historical paths
2. deeply embedded institutional features, including ‘non-negotiable’ professional norms like scientific autonomy
3. the way in which their formalised structures and activities are (loosely) integrated;
4. the ambiguity surrounding their (multifaceted) social functions or roles;
5. the inherent complexity of their core technologies;
6. the allocation (decentralisation) of authority and lack of a ‘central command’ structure;
7. the fluidity of participation by their core social actors



An emerging trend

- Higher education can still be treated as an organizational field to some extent
 - Isomorphism can be observed in the higher education system on a global, national, or local scale (Cai, 2023)
- However, universities now operate within institutional systems, in which multiple institutional logics coexist and interact within these systems
 - Universities must navigate and balance these various logics in their decision-making processes.




Core issues/challenges in higher education management and leadership

- Influx environmental challenges
- Organisational change/innovation (agency structure)
- Organisational complexity/tensions



The relevance of the institutional logics perspective

- The source of challenges in university leadership and management lies in the presence of multiple, conflicting institutional logics.
- Co-existence of multiple institutional logics can lead to conflicts and competing priorities.
- Managers and leaders must be aware of different logics and find ways to balance priorities.



Institutional logics approaches to higher education management and leadership



- Approaches to identifying institutional logics
- Institutional logics analysis of embedded agency

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Institutional logics analysis in higher education research

Yuzhuo Cai & Nicola Mountford

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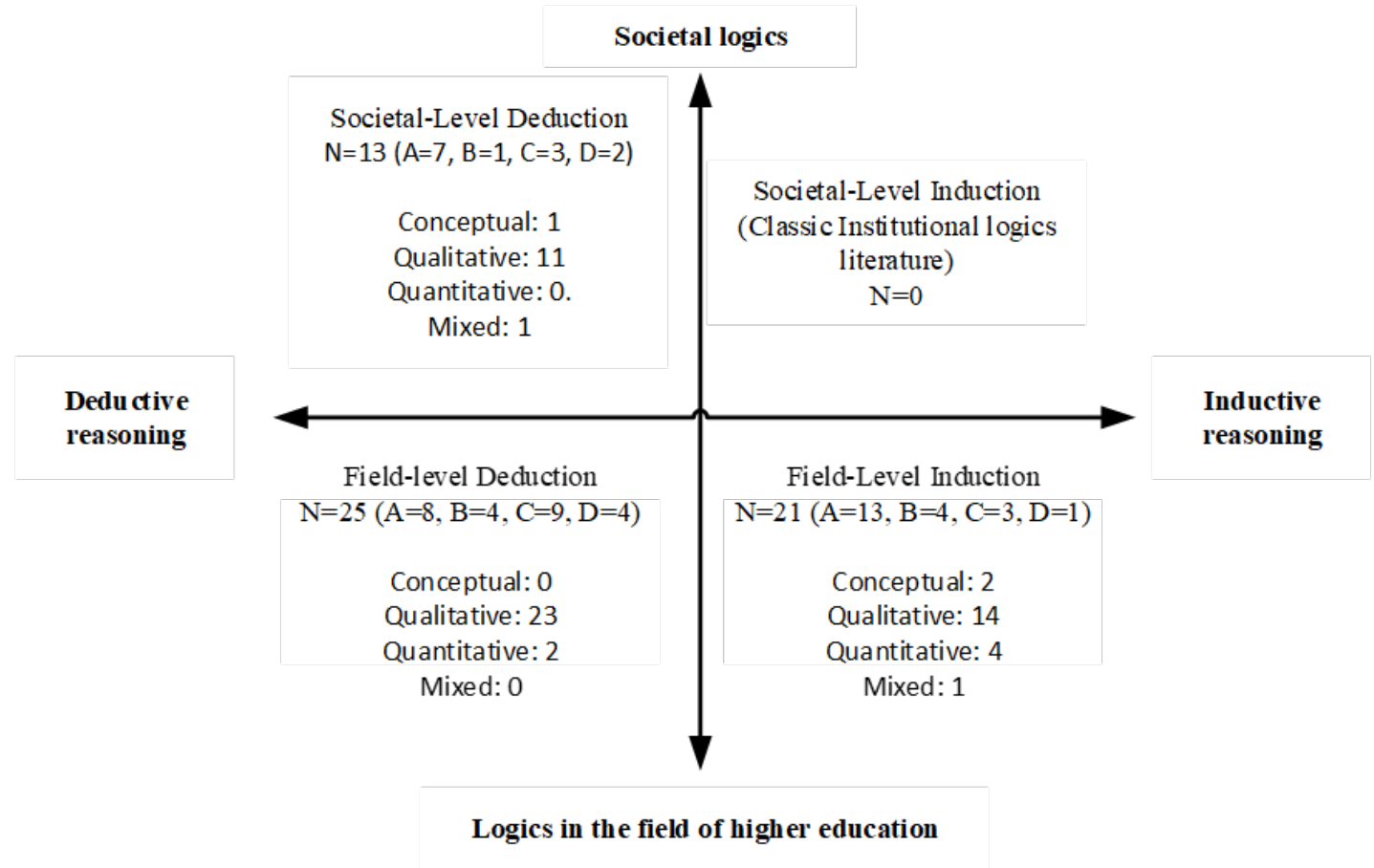
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Towards a flatter ontology of institutional logics: How logics relate in situations of institutional complexity

Nicola Mountford & Yuzhuo Cai

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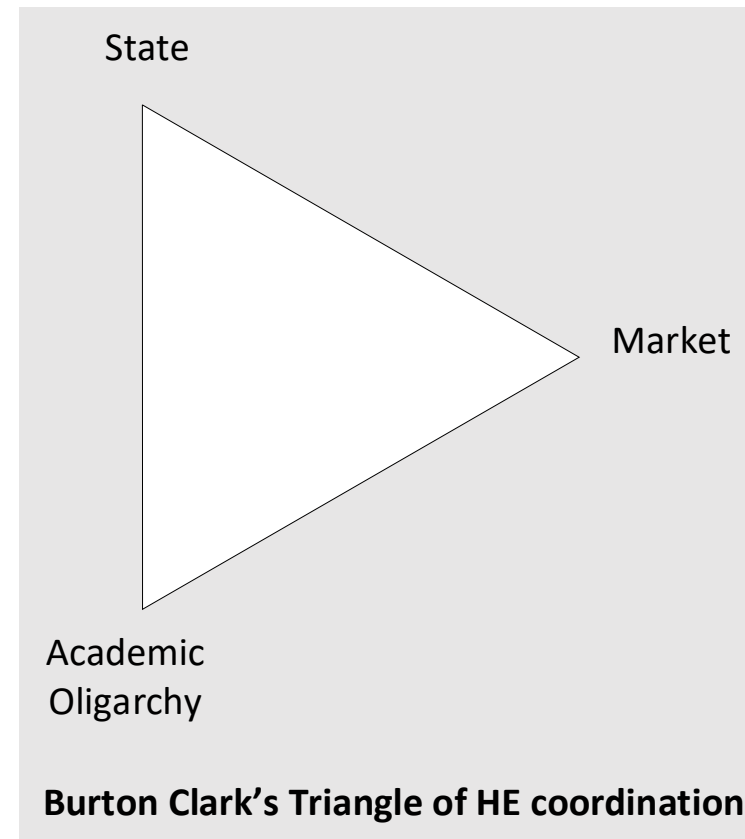
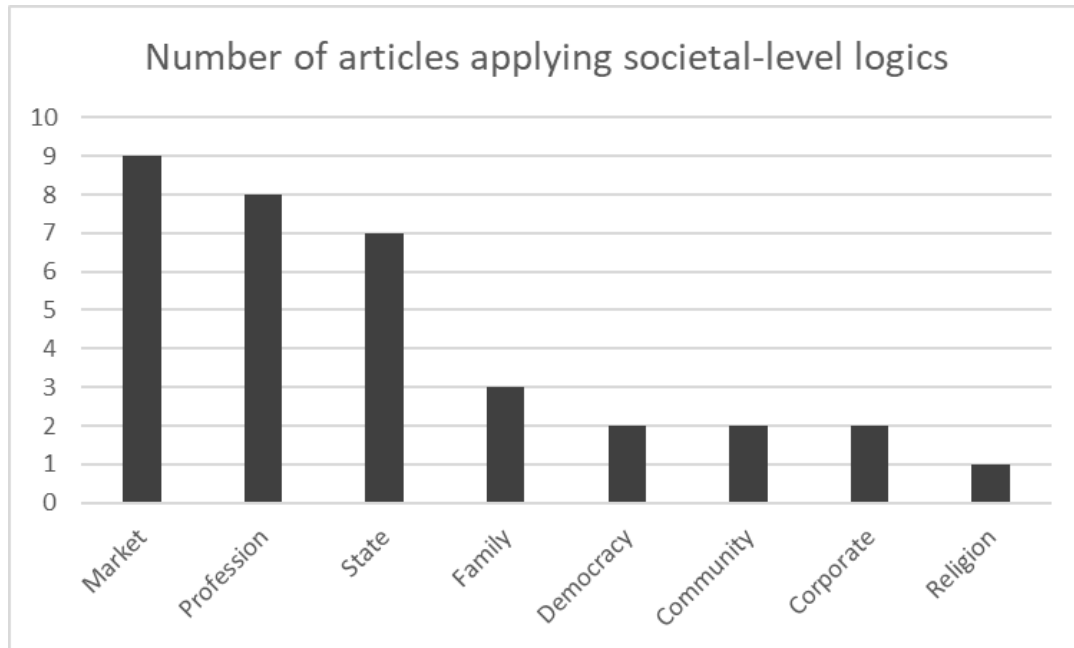
Typology of institutional logics analysis



N: Number of articles of higher education research
 Conceptual: Number of conceptual papers
 Qualitative: Number of qualitative papers
 Quantitative: Number of quantitative papers
 Mixed: Number of mixed methods papers

A: Higher education journals
 B: Journals including higher education research as a sub-field
 C: Management and business journals
 D: Other social science journals

Logics applied in the societal-level deduction



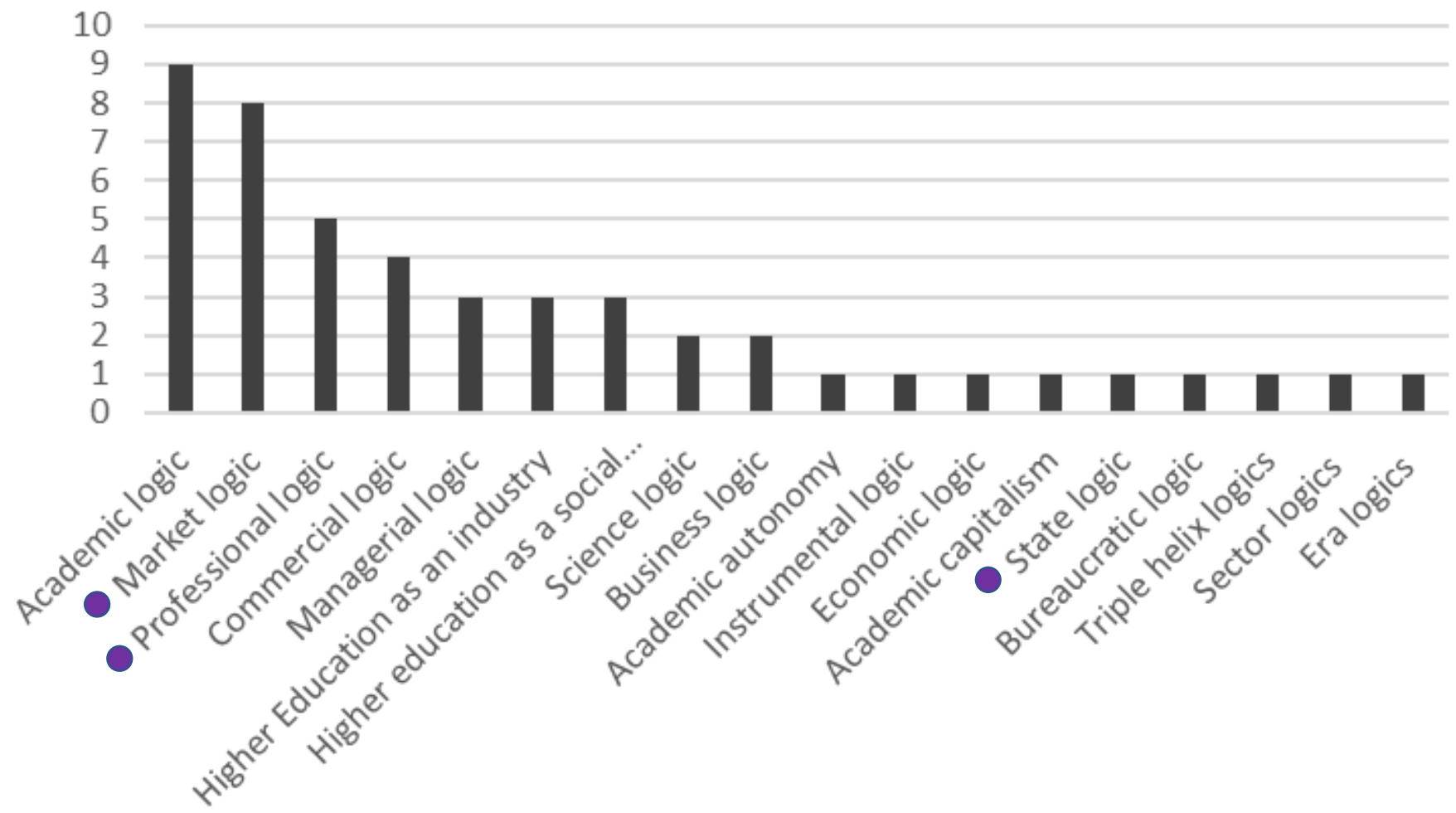


Challenges in societal-deduction approach

- In general, studies applying such approach more strictly follow institutional logics theory and show methodological rigour.
- However, there are two challenges:
 - The ideal-type societal logics, originally identified in the Western context, may be limited in institutional analysis in non-Western context.
 - Even in higher education studies in western countries, researchers expand the framework of ideal type societal logics by add new ones (e.g. managerial logic and logic of organisation), which are often freely defined.

Logics applied in the field-level deduction approach

Number of articles applying field-level logics



Challenges in Field-level deduction approach

- Compared to more well-defined ideal-type logics at the societal level, agreement is lacking on what ideal-type logics are at the field-level.
- With only a few exceptions, the formation of most ideal-type field-level logics in higher education research is difficult to trace.
- Researchers have different interpretation of logics with the same name.
- Some logics, though with different names, share similar assumptions.



Logics identified in field-level induction approach

Managerialism vs traditional colloquialism; Collegial, efficient-collegial, managerial archetypes;

Profiles of research groups in the lens of institutional logics;

Service-oriented logic vs. German specific classical logic

Logics economic sustainability vs. market endowment vs. education

Academic identities in the lens of institutional logics

Logics of universities' adaptation to economic recessions: Consumer service, market search, growing and greening, the complete arsenal

Logics of academic disciplines

Logics in higher education policymaking: Mission differentiation, student opportunity, system development and managerialism

Indigenous vs. Western social scientific logics; Autonomy, utilitarianism, managerialism

Logics as four distinctive stakeholder beliefs

Five logics of research excellence (Research centres)

Academic logic of high school vs. academic of higher education

Logic of science advancement vs. logic of coercive pressures to publish

Research excellence logics (among ERC recipients)

Scientific autonomous vs market logics

State logic, Business Logic

Challenges in field-level induction approach

- This approach is the most promising but, at the same time, the most problematic.
 - It is promising because it could provide a solid basis for identifying ideal type logics in the higher education field.
 - The approach is problematic because many of these new logics are rather freely defined and in some cases the logics identified do not strictly follow the definitions of institutional logics in the classic literature.



Concept misformation

Concept straining

- The problem of too few logics.
- If eight institutional logics, as societal-level ideal types, have been identified, then there is no room for further discovery of how particular logics of specific institutions are at work.

Concept stretching

- The problem of an excessive proliferation of logics.
- If logics become simply a particular organisation's engrained practices, sense of identity or sense of purpose, detached from a tight coupling with societal institutions, then an institutional logic becomes an empty concept

How to avoid concept misformation?

- A rigour approach to identifying field-level logics
- Theory method fit

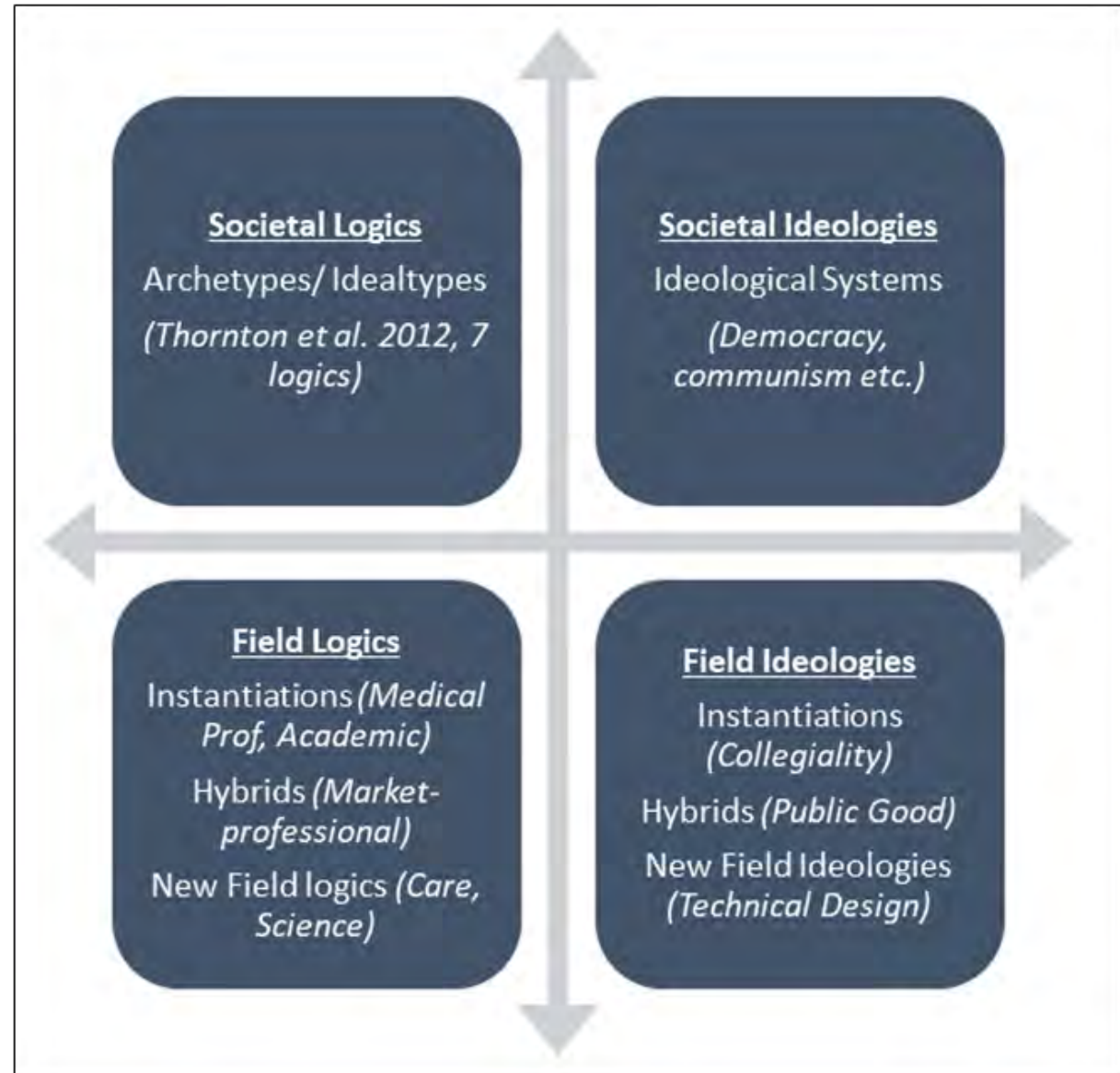


Distinction between societal-level and field-level logics

- Societal-level logics draw on institutional orders at the societal level (Friedland and Alford 1991) and have a stronger cultural component (Ocasio, Thornton, and Lounsbury 2017).
- Field-level logics are more connected to practices, and specifically those that occur at the organizational level (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012).



Logics and Ideologies at Societal and Field level



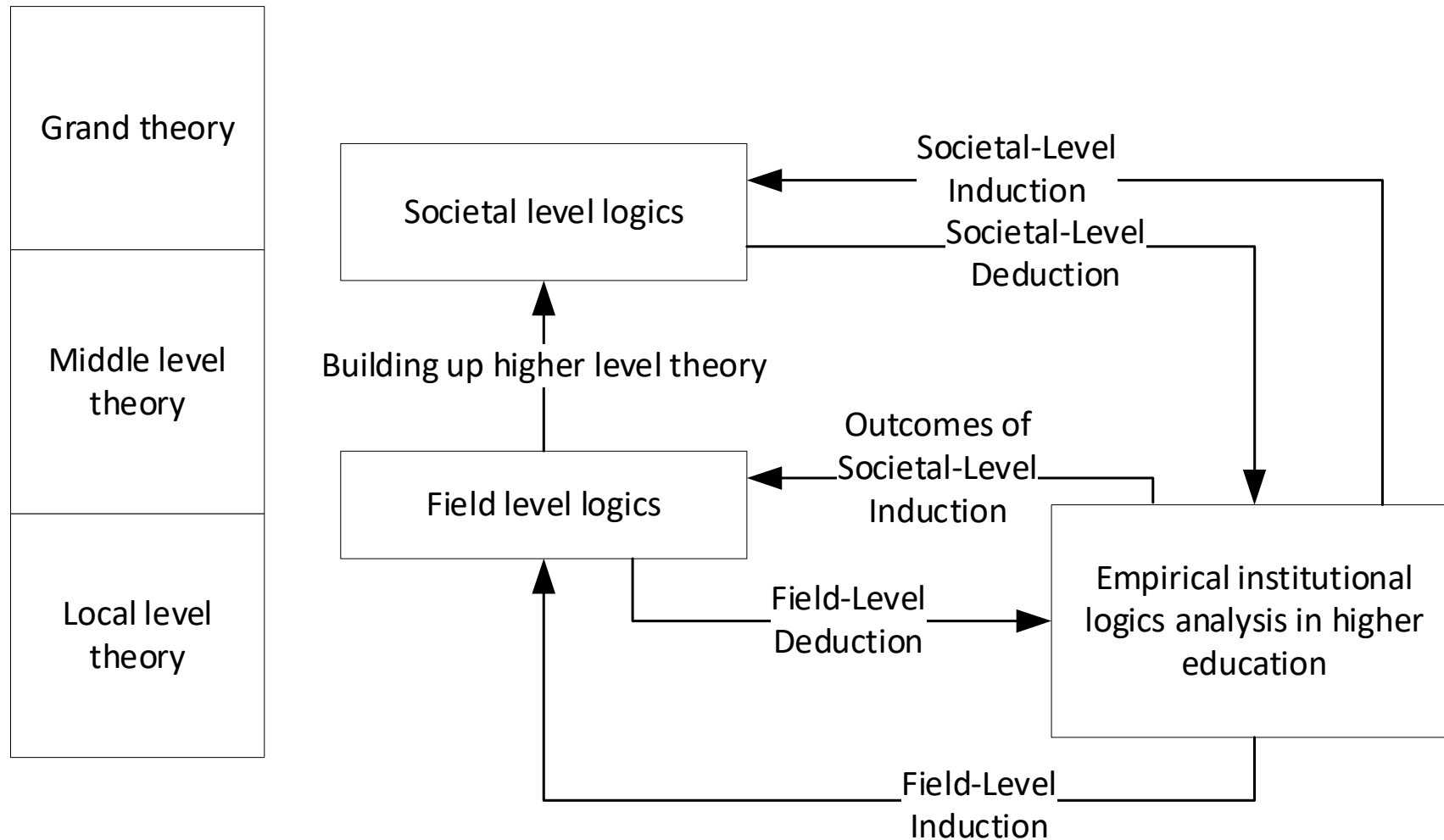
Analysis of the field level logics using elements of Thornton et al. (2012) framework.

	Professional Field Logics (against ideal type in gray)			Hybrid Logics at the Field Level			New Field Logics	
Analysis framework (Thornton et al., 2012)	Profession (Thornton et al., 2012)	Academic	Medical Professionalism	Market-managerial Market & Corporation	Market-professional Market & Professional	Professional-bureaucratic Profession and State	Science	Care
Root Metaphor	Relational Network	Community of Scholars	Defenders of individual and system health	Education/ healthcare as big business	The knowledge market	Professionals within a System	Search for an 'objective truth'	Patient centred care
Source of Legitimacy	Personal Expertise	Specialised (disciplinary) knowledge	Expert Judgement	Efficiency & effectiveness	Expertise as recognised by the market	Procedural	Scientific knowledge	Holistic expertise and approach
Source of Authority	Prof. Association	Moral work	Glass half-empty – pre-empting serious disease	New public management principles	Knowledge valued by the market	Professional	Disinterested research	Patient outcomes
Source of Identity	Quality of craft, personal reputation	Disciplinary peer review	Physician-patient relationship	Service provision and review	Peer review	Physician-patient relationship	Academic tribes	Community
Norms from...	Membership in Guild/association	Model of science and doctoral training	Identity based associations and medical training	Payors (government) and users (consumers)	Professional training modified by market expectations	Identity based associations and medical training	Scientific training	Patient-engagement

Analysis of field level ideologies

Field-level ideologies	Democracy	Public Good	Technical Design
Values	Participation & transparency	Public values (change over time and culture)	Belief in the virtues of technology
Structure	Representative and voting systems and structures.	Political accountability	Functionality, infrastructure, platforms
Action	Public debate e.g. patient rights	Standards, rights, guarantees, supports	Quality and functionality of technical solutions

Towards the theory-method fit (Cai and Mountford, 2022)



Paradox of embedded agency in the lens of institutional logics perspective

The 'paradox of embedded agency' (Seo and Creed 2002): if the actions of organisational actors are constrained by taken-for-granted institutions, how and why can the actors induce institutional changes (Horton and de Araujo Wanderley 2018)?



How mingling logics (institutional complexity) are managed via human agency.

Strategically choosing institutional logics

Dealing with institutional (logics) tensions

Leveraging different logics for institutional change



Institutional complexity

- Horizontal complexity, such as profession, market, state
- Vertical complexity, i.e. logics at societal, organizational and individual levels
- Dynamics of institutional complexity
 - While mixing different institutional logics may lead to innovation,
 - conflicting institutional logics, such as those between professionalism and markets, can result in perceived failure of innovation. (Dudau, Kominis, and Szocs, 2018)

Strategically selecting institutional logics based on actors' preferences and interests

Thornton et al. (2012)

- Logics persist through practices and hierarchies.
- Actors may challenge or reinforce logics to maintain or challenge power.

Nations (2018)

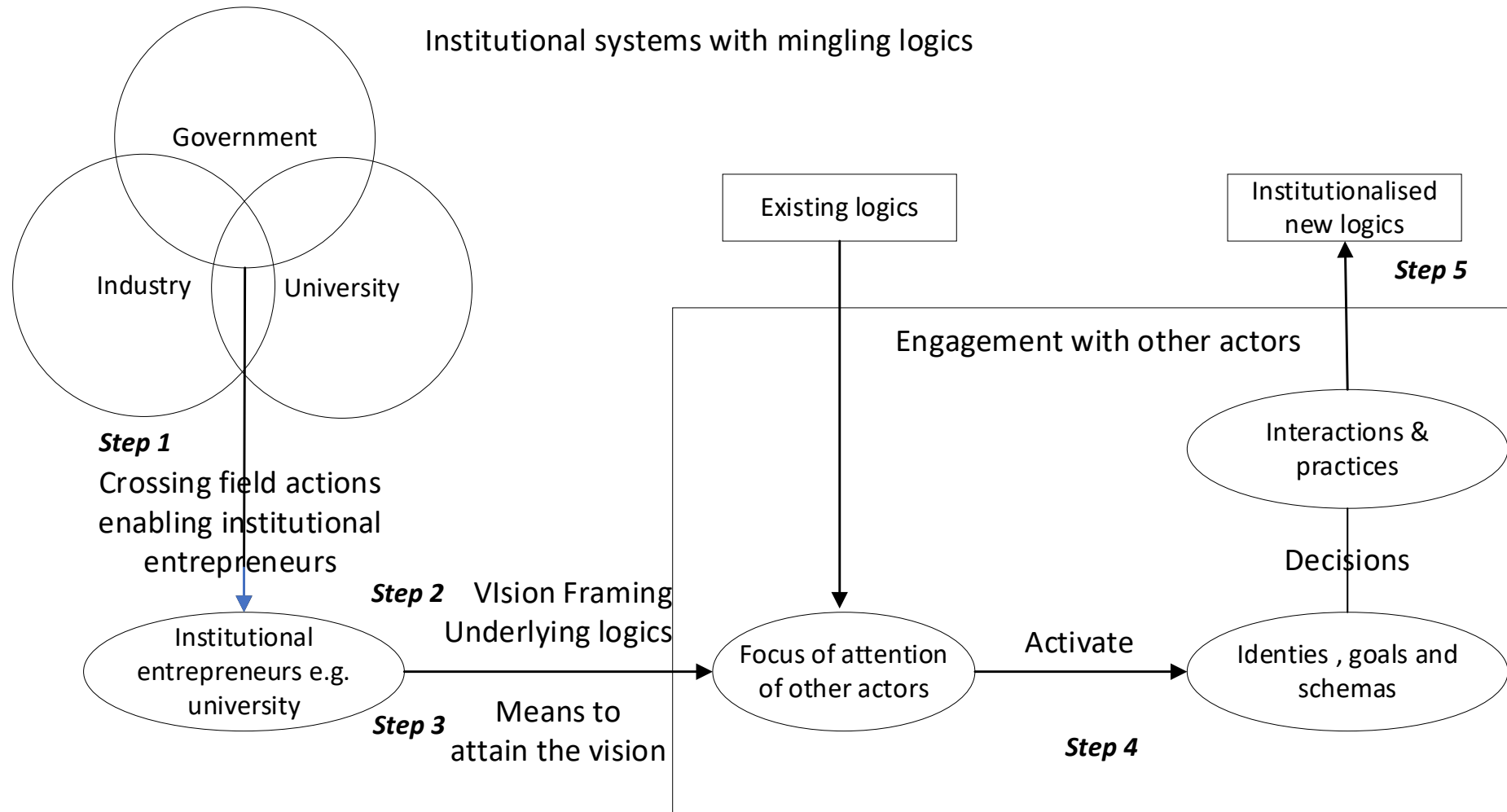
- Institutional logics can persist if university leaders believe that by defending the logic, they will win political favor with institutionally favored actors.
- Political interests can be a mechanism through which a logic persists over time.

Managing institutional tensions

‘Bridging strategies’ involve techniques, which enable organizations to manage different interests, alter institutional logics, and create a compromise that satisfies all parties.

‘Buffering strategies’ involve reducing external pressures by detaching or decoupling activities from external contacts.

Institutional entrepreneurship from the institutional logics perspective (Cai & Liu, 2020)



In a nutshell

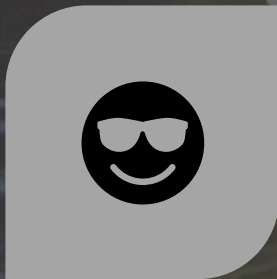
- While institutional logic refers to the "organising principle" that guide the behaviour of both individuals and organisations,
- the art of management and leadership lies in identifying and leveraging these complex organising principles.



Final reminders

- Avoid unconstrained use of institutional logics (as organising principles)
- Recognize the interplay between logics: some are compatible, others are contradictory
- Exercise caution when analyzing non-Western societies (Cai, Yang & Zheng, 2021)
 - Unique logics may exist in non-Western societies
 - Meanings of the "same" logic may differ between Western and non-Western societies.





THANK YOU!



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