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Institutional isomorphism

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The theory of institutional isomorphism

(Paul J. DiMaggio & Walter W. Powell)

Forms of institutional isomorphism

- Coercive isomorphism
- Mimetic isomorphism
- Normative isomorphism

Coercive isomorphism

- From formal or informal pressures exerted by other powerful organisations *or*
- Cultural expectations in the society
- May be felt as force, as persuasion, or as invitation to join in collusion

Mimetic isomorphism

- Orientation on traditional responses to uncertainty (imitation)
- Possible sources of uncertainty are poorly understood technologies, ambiguous goals, environmental change (experience or expectation)
- Emerges from peer learning (e.g. impact measurement)

Normative isomorphism

- Influence of professionalization (professional training, professional standards)
- Entry door for normative isomporphism is filtering of personnel (recruitment criteria): formal degrees, credentials from similar experts
- Information asymmetries between staff and trustees

What can we learn from institutional isomorphism?

- Stabilize your initiative and instill values
- Analysis based on institutionalism reduces risks attached to emerging fields