

Extending Institutional Isomorphism: Adaptive and Dynamic Dimensions in Green Policy Strategies in Knowledge Management Fields

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Abstract: Although DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) theory of organisational isomorphism suggests that organisations develop structural similarities under external pressures (coercion, mimetic and normative pressures), it is clear that this model cannot capture the dynamics shaped by digitalisation and ecological crises. To fill this theoretical gap, this study offers a new perspective by exploring the concepts of "adaptive isomorphism" and "dynamic isomorphism" in the context of green politics and knowledge management. Adaptive isomorphism stands for the ability of organisations to react flexibly to environmental regulations, market fluctuations and technological breakthroughs in the short to medium term. In this process, knowledge management systems form the backbone of organisational adaptation through concrete steps such as energy transition, resource optimisation and circular economy practises. Dynamic isomorphism represents a more radical transformation: It requires the reconfiguration of strategic vision and core business models in line with environmental sustainability goals. This approach is embodied by the continuous learning and evolution of organisations. The study extends DiMaggio and Powell's model by highlighting the integration of green strategies with knowledge management and the central role of both types of isomorphism in the processes by which organisations adapt to changing conditions, develop innovative strategies and achieve competitive advantage. Beyond the theoretical contributions, it offers a roadmap for organisations by providing concrete practical recommendations for sustainable transformation.

Keywords: Institutional isomorphism, Adaptive isomorphism, Dynamic isomorphism, Green policy strategies, Knowledge management

1. Introduction

The environmental and sustainability challenges in today's globalized world economic order are prompting businesses to re-blend within traditional structures and strategies, and to think in new ways and paradigms (Bansal & Roth, 2000). DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) model of institutional isomorphism explains how similar structures form between organisations through coercive, mimetic and normative pressure. However, today's rapidly changing environmental and technological dynamics show that aspects of this model that focus only on conformity to existing norms are inadequate and this idea cannot fully explain the rapid changes in the field of sustainability and is therefore criticised (Hoffman, 2001; Wijen, 2014). In particular, the complexity of environmental policy and the importance of appropriate information management (Nonaka, 1994) show that it is not enough for organisations to adapt only in the short term (adaptive isomorphism). They also need long-term, fundamental changes (dynamic isomorphism) (Teece, 2007).

This article takes DiMaggio and Powell's model one step further and add the concepts of 'adaptive' and 'dynamic' isomorphism. In this way, sustainability strategies are better linked to institutional theory. The main research question is: 'Why does the traditional isomorphism model fail to meet the diverse demands of green transformation and how can this gap be bridged by adaptive-dynamic integration?'

The literature shows that organisational convergence is limited to static norms (Scott, 2014), while sustainability-oriented transformations require dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007) and knowledge-based learning processes (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). Hart's (1995) "resource-based view" theory, for example, emphasises the integration of environmental strategies with an organisation's core competencies. However, it is not yet fully understood how this integration is shaped by mechanisms of organisational isomorphism.

This paper analyses the synergy of green policies with knowledge management (Grant, 1996) and institutional flexibility (Shrivastava, 1995) by distinguishing between adaptive isomorphism (short-term operational adjustment) and dynamic isomorphism (long-term strategic development). The proposed extended framework shows that instead of resisting homogenisation pressures (Oliver, 1991), organisations develop innovative heterogeneity (Padgett & Powell, 2012) to achieve environmental sustainability goals.

2. Theoretical Framework

Institutional isomorphism is a central concept of institutional theory for explaining the homogeneity of organisations in a field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Coercive isomorphism arises from the formal and informal pressures exerted on organisations by other organisations with which they must work, as well as the influence of societal and cultural expectations on the organisation. This pressure causes organisations to come to terms with the status quo through persuasion, coercion or suggestion (Oliver, 1991). Uncertainty is one of the most important factors leading to imitation or mimicry in particular. The inadequacy of the technologies used by the organisation, the uncertainty of the objectives or the uncertainty created by the environment itself lead organisations to model themselves on other organisations. Mimetic behaviour is seen as an advantage for organisations and the economy of action is emphasised. Organisations fall back on existing experience when they are confronted with problems whose causes they do not fully understand or when the solutions become complex. This leads to the imitation of other organisations (Haveman, 1993). A third source of isomorphic change is normative and arises primarily from professionalisation. Professionalisation is defined as the framework that enables each individual practising a profession to control, through collective effort, the characteristics, methods and production processes of work and of all (Dacin, et al., 2002). This classification of isomorphism is based on a purely analytical framework and the boundaries between them are not strictly drawn.

Nowadays, however, rapidly changing environmental pressures, technological innovations and sustainability requirements limit the explanatory power of the traditional isomorphism model. Especially in the field of knowledge management, digital transformation and the importance of environmental strategies challenge the assumption that organisations only become similar due to coercive, imitation and normative pressure (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Drucker, 1999). Castells (2011) and Acemoglu & Robinson (2012) argue that the structural changes in the modern economy have deepened the strategic transformation processes of organisations and require new approaches to sustainability goals. Hobsbawm (1990) and Anderson (2006) have also emphasised the importance of flexible and innovative strategies beyond traditional institutional structures in the transformation of nation states and global systems.

In this context, the limitations of the current model are that it is unable to respond adequately to the pressure to innovate created by ecological and technological dynamics and the adaptive demands of knowledge management (Christensen, 1997). Adaptive isomorphism is the process by which organisations gradually and incrementally adapt to environmental regulations and market demands in the short and medium term while maintaining their current structure. This is the process of adaptation to external factors on the basis of optimisation (Teece, 2007). Dynamic isomorphism, on the other hand, is a process of long-term strategic change, radical innovation and the complete redesign of organisational structures. This process requires fundamental change. For green policies and knowledge management practises to increase their effectiveness, it is important to think together. Organisations may need to change in order to meet environmental and economic challenges in the short, medium and long term. In some ways, it may be necessary to combine the two dimensions at the intellectual level to take a broader and more flexible approach to green policy and knowledge management (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

3. Adaptive Isomorphism: Environmental and Strategic Adaptation

3.1 Definition and Conceptualisation

It is the process by which institutions gradually and incrementally adapt to environmental regulations and short- to medium-term market demands while maintaining their current structure in response to environmental, technological and economic dynamics (Child, 1997; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). This approach, which goes beyond the framework of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional isomorphism and focuses on structural optimisation, is about continuous interaction with the environment (Scott, 2008). While traditional isomorphism explains the tendency of organisations to have rather static and uniform structures, adaptive isomorphism assumes dynamic and living organisational units that can react quickly to the ever-changing environmental pressures (Weick, 1995). This adaptation process requires an active rather than a passive strategy. This ability can give organisations a flexible and sustainable competitive advantage in the face of environmental uncertainty.

Theoretically, adaptive isomorphism is a dynamic process of individual beliefs based on Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) concepts of continuous learning and innovation in the process of knowledge creation (Argyris & Schön, 1996). This perspective highlights the need for organisations to continuously adapt their structures to the fast-

moving knowledge and technology spiral and to invest in their continuous development beyond adapting to current environmental regulations (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). Adaptation processes are also consistent with Porter and van der Linde's (1995b) hypothesis of 'competitive advantage through environmental adaptation'. According to them, environmental pressures pave the way for the development of innovative strategies and lead to improvements in resource utilisation, energy efficiency and operating costs (Hart, 1995). This process (environmental regulation) paves the way for triggered innovation and competitiveness, not coercion.

The basis of adaptive isomorphism is that a proactive rather than a reactive attitude towards environmental stress requires competence (Miles & Snow, 1978). This proactive attitude is, in a sense, the process and ability to develop an adaptation to the environment. This process defines a process in which organisations not only refuse to comply with normative and legal frameworks, but also use and adapt their internal dynamics and knowledge base (Wernerfelt, 1984). The process involves the development of short- to medium-term flexible structures as well as long-term strategies (Senge, 1990). In this environment of uncertainty, organisations are forced to focus on their survival and development.

Adaptive isomorphism refers to the continuous improvement of existing structures and processes in response to the environmental, economic and technological pressures to which today's business world is constantly exposed (Elkington, 1997). The concept not only targets these external factors, but also requires the development of internal resources and knowledge management processes (Grant, 1996). This approach offers companies the opportunity to gain an advantage in sustainable competition.

3.2 Applications in Knowledge Management

Adaptive isomorphism and sustainable knowledge management are beneficial for organisations as they are flexible in achieving sustainability goals and can adapt to environmental regulations. This approach refers to knowledge management processes that require continuous updating and the ability to adapt to changing technological and environmental conditions as quickly as possible. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), for example, argue that organisations can only remain agile in an environment where knowledge is generated dynamically and in a healthy environment where innovative solutions are developed. In this context, green technologies that are integrated into the digital transformation - e.g. energy-efficient data centres, sustainable waste management systems - can be seen as concrete examples of adaptive isomorphism. Such short- to medium-term dynamic responses that enable companies to optimise resource consumption - one of their biggest challenges - cannot only enable them to tackle the optimisation problem, but also provide a strong response to environmental pressures (Drucker, 1999).

In addition, green certification schemes, international environmental standards and local regulatory authorities are some of the factors that challenge or even provoke firms' adaptive mechanisms to take action (Porter & van der Linde, 1995a). This provocation or driving force can lead companies not only to developing environmentally friendly strategies in information management, but also to optimise their corporate structures. Examples such as reducing the energy consumption of data centres, which are now leaders in electricity consumption, increasing efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources, and sustainable waste management are expressions of adaptive isomorphism at the corporate level.

In short, this concept can be defined as the rapid and gradual response and adaptation of organisations to environmental and technological constraints in the implementation of green knowledge management strategies. As this process is a fundamental dynamic in the strategic implementation of green strategies, it provides a perspective that not only ensures compliance with existing norms, but also integrates environmentally friendly practises that increase operational efficiency, reduce costs and provide a competitive advantage by helping organisations monitor and improve their environmental performance in real time.

4. Dynamic Isomorphism: Temporal Evolution and Continuous Transformation

4.1 Definition and Theoretical Expansion

Dynamic isomorphism refers to organisations undergoing long-term strategic transformation processes in the face of ecological, technological and global dynamics. The coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism highlighted in DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) model explains the adaptation of organisations to their existing institutional structures; however, this model does not fully capture the need for organisations to make fundamental changes to their underlying business models and strategic visions. While Tushman and Romanelli (1985) argue that technological change triggers strategic restructuring processes in organisations, dynamic

isomorphism argues that these innovations require continuous evolution and radical transformation rather than temporary adaptation. Castells (2011) emphasises the role of the digital revolution and the global network society in restructuring organisations and links the fundamental dynamics of dynamic isomorphism to today's environmental and technological constraints. Furthermore, Powell and DiMaggio (1991) emphasise that change processes in the institutional environment are not limited to adaptation, but also include processes of creative destruction and restructuring.

4.2 Evolution of Green Policies over Time

Green policies in the field of knowledge management not only adapt to short-term regulations, but also develop as part of long-term strategic transformation processes. Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), using their applied theories of structural change, found that organisations revise their fundamental strategies to achieve their environmental sustainability goals, i.e. green strategies are constantly renewed and this is part of corporate transformation. Organisations are considering strategic reorientation processes related to digitalisation and technological innovation to achieve their long-term goals. This dynamic points to the radical transformations caused by the isomorphism of the fundamental business models of organisational structures. Porter and Kramer (2011) emphasise the undeniable importance of strategic transformation for the development of green policies, as companies that integrate social and environmental issues into their business strategies can not only provide social benefits but also achieve competitive advantages.

4.3 Organisational Change Processes

Dynamic isomorphism requires organisations to radically restructure their fundamental strategic and cultural structures. While Nelson and Winter's (1982) theory of organisational evolution attributes continuous renewal to environmental and technological pressures, Senge's (1990) concept of the learning organisation refers to a long-term strategic transformation that is only possible through continuous organisational learning and innovation. This process cannot be understood as a simple optimisation of operational processes, but requires radical changes in corporate culture, strategic vision and business models and encourages organisations to pursue green strategies in the area of knowledge management. In this context, the concept provides a perspective from which organisations pursuing green policies to achieve environmental sustainability goals can theorise the fundamental and lasting changes that this process requires. In some ways, Teece's (2007) theory of dynamic capabilities overlaps with the concept of dynamic isomorphism, as it points to the need to constantly reconfigure and develop internal factors (capabilities) in response to external factors. In this adaptation process, this concept refers not only to external pressures but also to internal renewal (such as strategic learning and capacity building). This is consistent with the perspective of the two arguments in terms of long-term goals and helps to explain how they approach the angle of developing innovative practises.

5. Integration of Adaptive and Dynamic Isomorphism: A New Ontological Framework

5.1 Theoretical Synthesis: The Unity of Adaptive and Dynamic Isomorphism

Although the institutional isomorphism model was developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) to explain the responses of organisations to environmental pressures, this model has been criticised for not adequately capturing organisational change processes over time (Greenwood et al., 2008; Scott, 2014). While the theory of institutional isomorphism generally assumes that organisations adapt to existing institutional structures with which they have previously had experience, adaptive and dynamic isomorphism treat and extend the topic from a completely different temporal perspective. Adaptive isomorphism explains how organisations are able to respond quickly to ever-changing environmental, economic and technological constraints (Oliver, 1991), while dynamic isomorphism focuses on long-term strategic change, radical innovation and the complete redesign of institutional structures (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985).

In a sense, the concepts of adaptive and dynamic isomorphism are temporally complementary. While adaptive isomorphism is associated with short- to medium-term change processes, dynamic isomorphism can help to explain longer-term, more strategic and structural transformations and sustainability. However, in the context of knowledge management and environmental policy strategies, it can be a strategic mistake for organisations to choose only one isomorphism model, which can lead to an incomplete or incorrect reading of the process. Therefore, the two concepts should be considered together and organisations should always have both short- to medium-term action plans and long-term strategic and fundamental change goals (Seo & Creed, 2002; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

This integrative approach adds a new ontological dimension to institutional theory. It goes beyond the reactive responses of organisations to isomorphic pressures and explores how organisations translate these pressures through active transformations. This new framework takes a more holistic perspective on how knowledge management processes and environmental policies are shaped at both the micro level (organisational learning, cultural adaptation) and the macro level (institutional norms, industrial regulations).

5.2 Practical and Political Implications: Transforming Dynamics of Strategic Cohesion

Organisations can achieve their environmental sustainability goals not only by adapting to existing norms, but also through strategic processes that involve long-term transformations (Bansal & Roth, 2000). Under adaptive isomorphism, organisations can respond quickly to changing environmental conditions by developing short-term strategies, while dynamic isomorphism determines how these strategies are institutionalised and integrated into radical transformations in the long term (Garud & Karnøe, 2003).

When analysing corporate sustainability strategies, for example, (short-term) compliance with regulations to reduce the carbon footprint can be seen as an adaptive isomorphism, while green innovation processes can be seen as a dynamic isomorphism, as a radical transformation process of industry standards is a long and arduous journey (Hoffman, 2001). In the face of environmental regulation, the lens through which organisations view the issues will be their strategic choice. While some will be content to comply with existing requirements, others will achieve long-term competitive advantage through radical change (Hart, 1995). In this context, green information technologies and sustainable business models provide important examples of how adaptive and dynamic processes interact.

From a strategic perspective, the integration of adaptive and dynamic isomorphism can also provide clues as to how policy makers should develop sustainability strategies. While short-term incentives and regulations support adaptive isomorphism, promoting long-term structural changes will contribute to the spread of dynamic isomorphism (Etzion, 2007). The European Union's Green Deal, for example, aims to ensure that companies not only comply with current environmental standards, but also make long-term sustainability changes (Geels, 2011).

5.3 Case Studies and Examples: Green IT and Environmental Innovation

To better understand the combined effect of adaptive and dynamic isomorphism, the processes of companies introducing green IT strategies can be analysed. For example, technology giants such as Google and Microsoft have developed strategies that incorporate both adaptive and dynamic isomorphism processes by investing in renewable energy sources to achieve their carbon neutrality goals (Porter & van der Linde, 1995).

5.3.1 Google's sustainability strategy

When Google set a goal to become carbon neutral in 2007, the company initially took an adaptive isomorphic approach to comply with regulations. Later, however, the company radically changed its energy consumption and developed energy management systems based on artificial intelligence. This is one of the most concrete examples of an adaptive process that evolves into a dynamic transformation over time (Pinkse & Kolk, 2012).

5.3.2 Tesla and dynamic isomorphism

To increase sustainability in the automotive industry, Tesla not only adapted to the existing regulatory framework, but also undertook a strategic transformation that completely reshaped the industry (Unruh, 2000). In order to increase the acceptance of electric vehicles, the company developed a competitive advantage based on innovation and combined this process with a radical reorganisation. In the electric vehicle market, Tesla has managed to undertake an organisational restructuring and turn this advantage into a comprehensive consolidation to increase end-user acceptance and turn innovation into an effective competitive strategy. These approaches simply show how they are influenced by adaptive isomorphism (short to medium-term planning) and how they are driven by dynamic isomorphism (long-term strategic structural changes).

5.3.3 Conclusion: Towards a new ontological framework

By integrating the concepts of adaptive and dynamic isomorphism, this model offers the possibility to view organisations in the context of knowledge management and sustainability strategies from a broader perspective of institutional transformation. While institutional isomorphism theory generally assumes that organisations respond (adapt) isomorphically within existing institutional structures, this new ontological framework expands the explanation of how organisations adapt in the context of change and, furthermore,

their ability to actively promote change to achieve benefits. This model encourages organisations to undertake long-term strategic structuring in addition to short to medium-term planning, as new opportunities can only be achieved through new competition.

6. Conclusion

This study explores how a more holistic approach can be pursued by integrating adaptive and dynamic isomorphism. It draws on DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) critique of the traditional model of institutional isomorphism prevalent in the literature. While DiMaggio and Powell's three-part theorem can explain institutional convergence, organisations are not able to respond appropriately to technological advances and evolving knowledge management, at least not within the framework of this theory. The model takes a more holistic approach and expands the theoretical framework by focusing on adaptive isomorphism - how organisations are able to respond quickly to ever-changing environmental, economic and technological constraints - and dynamic isomorphism - how long-term strategic change, radical innovation and a complete redesign of institutional structures occur. It therefore challenges organisations to use these two dimensions together in the face of environmental sustainability and the knowledge-based environment. It thus complements the missing aspects of the concept of institutional isomorphism developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983).

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

As a theoretical proposal, this study aims to expand the theoretical framework of institutional isomorphism and reconceptualise isomorphism as a more flexible and comprehensive model. While the existing literature focuses on institutional change in the context of external pressures and institutional norms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2001), this study emphasises the importance of internal learning processes, knowledge management and strategic decision making (Wijen, 2014; Porter & van der Linde, 1995). This extended model is intended to make a theoretical contribution, particularly in the field of green policy and environmental sustainability. As Oliver (1991) and Hoffman (2001) point out, while the traditional isomorphism model is suitable for explaining the external challenges organisations face and change, it is far from explaining how they can actively drive this change, i.e. it may not explain their ability to actively promote change. Linking these theoretical concepts (adaptive and dynamic isomorphism) shows that organisations are not just passive adaptive mechanisms to these external pressures, but also have the resilience to channel these pressures and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

6.2 Future Research Directions

Although this study attempts to address the concepts of adaptive and dynamic isomorphism together, there are several areas that should be further investigated in the future. In particular, empirical studies evaluating the applicability of this model are needed and should be expanded. In particular, case studies investigating how the model works in the energy, finance and manufacturing sectors could show how valid the model is in practise. In addition, research on digital transformation and artificial intelligence technologies should investigate their impact on organisational change processes. Research could focus on the impact of digitalisation on adaptive isomorphism, i.e. how it accelerates and subsequently manifests dynamic isomorphism (Bocken et al., 2014).

Another important area of research is the study of patterns (adaptive and dynamic isomorphism) under the influence of political and regulatory factors. The question of how national (government policy) and international (regulations) and organisations contribute to sustainability strategies will be an important topic for future research (Hoffman & Ventresca, 2002). In this context, the theoretical and practical dimensions that the model will add will not only deepen the literature on institutional isomorphism, but also contribute to the fields of knowledge management and sustainability studies.

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