



Logic combination and performance across occupational communities: The case of French film directors☆



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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the effects of logic combination on cultural entrepreneurs' performance in both their original (artistic) and new (business) occupational communities. An analysis of the impact of the director-producer logic combination on artistic and commercial performance in French cinema confirms an asymmetry in outcomes: (1) although performance in the original artistic community is impaired by repeated logic combination (receiving fewer awards), (2) performance in the new business community benefits from logic combination (increased box office returns) as long as directors remain close to the boundary separating their original and new occupational communities.

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1. Introduction

Cultural entrepreneurs differ radically on the degree to which they are willing and able to diversify their activities and embrace multiple logics within an industry. Whereas some tend to “stick to their knitting” throughout their career, others at certain times draw on the resources they have accumulated to embrace new logics (Zuckerman, Kim, Ukanwa, & Von Rittmann, 2003). Institutional logics are defined as the norms, expectations, values, and rules specific to an occupational community and distinct from others, including within the same industry (Thornton, 2002). Institutional logics serve as a basis for collective identity. They allow individuals and organizations to produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality. Logic combination occurs when an industry actor from an established occupational community concurrently embraces the institutional logic and becomes accountable for the norms, expectations, values, and rules of another occupational community. Existing research focuses on the consequences of logic combination relative to the *original* occupational community's norms and expectations and on how industry actors frame, maintain, and control new markets' logics (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Durand, Rao, & Monin, 2007). In

general, logic combination is found to be detrimental to performance (Hsu, Hannan, & Koçak, 2009).

Our study questions the consequences of logic combination for cultural entrepreneurs' output performance relative to *both* original and new occupational communities. Our setting is the French cinema industry, where directors customarily embrace an artistic logic and producers customarily embrace a commercial logic (Farchy, 1999; Durand & Jourdan, 2012). The historical, cultural, and legal characteristics of the French cinema industry reinforce the power of the director over that of the producer. In this respect, the French cinema industry stands in contrast to more commercially driven cinema industries, such as Hollywood (see Appendix A). We define film directors as cultural entrepreneurs and analyze all the 983 films involving the 338 individual film directors who made at least two movies released in France between 1988 and 1997. Analyzing whether logic combination (achieved when directors are also producers) is associated with higher or lower artistic and commercial film performance contributes to enriching the theory of logic combination and the discussion of the consequences of spanning genres, categories, and occupations (Durand & Paoletta, 2013).

2. Theory and hypotheses

Cultural entrepreneurs may combine logics in search of advantages across occupational communities (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). For instance, the opportunity to capitalize on their credentials and legitimacy across communities, to increase their revenue, or to bring to existence new products or services. Logic combination may also appear as a natural progression in the career of cultural entrepreneurs. Thus,

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experienced chefs will be inclined to open their own restaurants, and to expand into franchising by using their name to enter new geographical markets (e.g., in various cities) or in some cases media (e.g., by becoming television presenters and producers). By participating in two occupational communities, cultural entrepreneurs who combine logics must respond to two distinct sets of expectations pertaining to their original and new community (e.g., artistic and business logics).

Logic combination goes beyond the temporary extension of activities from one category to another defined as “stretchwork” (O’Mahony & Bechky, 2006: 919). Logic combination involves the conjunction of clearly distinct sets of credentials, expectations, and performance criteria (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). In the creative industries, the different sensibilities in orientation and training of artists and managers make logic combination extremely difficult: artists are “creative, unpredictable, iconoclastic, spontaneous and social critics; and managers [are] rational, ordered, [they plan and work] within the social order” (Reid & Karambayya, 2009: 1081).

The original occupational community of cultural entrepreneurs who engage in a new occupation and abide by its fresh logic may interpret this move as an abandonment of its original credo, and a tarnishing of its attachment to certain norms, expectations, and performance criteria. In a given occupational community, incumbents patrol the category borders and levy sanctions against straddlers—that is, against cultural entrepreneurs who explicitly combine the logic of their own occupational community with that of another (Polos, Hannan, & Carroll, 2002; Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2005). Conformity to expectations pays (Zuckerman et al., 2003; Hsu, 2006; Ebbes & Wijnberg, 2012; O’Mahony & Bechky, 2006), whereas boundary spanning and dual occupancy do not (Hsu et al., 2009). Incumbents seek to preserve the social valuation of observable characteristics and long-elaborated inferences between these characteristics and performance rewards (Berger, Ridgeway, Fisek, & Norman, 1998; Webster & Hysom, 1998).

When cultural entrepreneurs espouse a new logic that is alien to that of their original occupational community, they do not fulfill the latter’s norms and expectations. Logic combination challenges the definition of the original community, for which risks of delegitimation and of identity blurring increase (Berger et al., 1998; Hsu et al., 2009). Straddlers are therefore likely to face opposition and resistance from their original occupational community. Hence:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Cultural entrepreneurs who combine the logic of their original occupational community with the logic of another occupational community will experience lower valuation of their output in their original occupational community.

By espousing a new logic, cultural entrepreneurs consent to abiding by the norms and expectations of the new occupational community and to having their output assessed according to the performance criteria enforced in the new occupational community. Members of the original occupational community do not customarily rule the performance attribution process in the new community. For instance, peers of chef Alain Ducasse do not have direct control on the commercial performance of his business ventures. Therefore, whereas the original occupational community has the capacity to stop rewarding its members who combine logics (Hypothesis 1), it will most likely not be able to affect the performance of straddlers in the new occupational community.

Cultural entrepreneurs combine logics when the capital (symbolic, social, or economic) accumulated in their original community has some value in the target community (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, performance achieved in the original community may become an exchange resource in the new community (Baker & Faulkner, 1991). For instance, a chef who becomes a television presenter and culinary program producer retains her culinary credentials and legitimacy while increasing her commitment to the culinary arts by disseminating recipes and know-how to a broader audience. Cultural entrepreneurs who straddle logics obtain positive outcomes in their new community when their

prior performance is fungible with the performance criteria of the new community. Resource selection is also fundamental for any project, and cultural entrepreneurs who straddle logics can help attract talent and better select the resources necessary for success: When they cross boundaries, they bring their expertise, experience, and networks with them. Therefore, new community members help value straddlers’ assets and align operations in a way that meets their objectives and contributes to success.

However, the norms, expectations, and performance criteria of the new occupational community contradict to some extent expectations from the original community (Marquis & Lounsbury, 2007; Durand & Jourdan, 2012). The positive relationship between straddling and performance in the new community is therefore likely to be higher when straddlers stay close to the boundary separating logics than when they purport to fully embrace the new occupation. In the latter case, incumbents may feel threatened, straddlers may lack full expertise in the new occupation, and audiences may not recognize straddlers as pure members of the community, significantly reducing the expected positive relationship between logic combination and performance in the new community. Hence (see Fig. 1):

Hypothesis 2 (H2). Cultural entrepreneurs who combine the logic of their original occupational community with the logic of another occupational community will experience higher valuation of their output in the new occupational community the closer they stay to the logic boundary separating the original and new occupational communities.

3. Context and methods

The double allegiance of creative industries, including cinema, to the artistic and business logics makes them an appropriate terrain to study logic combination by cultural entrepreneurs and its consequences (Delmestri, Montanari, & Usai, 2005; Hirsch, 2000). Attributing the often conflicting artistic and commercial responsibilities to two different leaders customarily permits dealing with the contradictions between the artistic and business logics (Reid & Karambayya, 2009; Voss, Cable, & Voss, 2000). Long-standing disputes are also pervasive between those who see cultural goods as untainted expressions of their creators and those who consider that the latter must respond to consumers’ needs within clearly stated economic constraints (Alvarez, Mazza, Strandgaard Pedersen, & Svejnova, 2005; Glynn, 2000; Lampel, Lant, & Shamsie, 2000).

In cinema, the entrepreneurial act of artistic creation is usually regarded as separate from the financial and managerial occupations of production and distribution (Alvarez et al., 2005; Ebbes & Wijnberg, 2012; Jones, 2001). The film director is in charge of the movie’s artistic completion and has significant influence over the selection of its most prominent creative and technical contributors. The director, who is under less direct economic pressure than the producer, feels more accountable for the artistic merit of the movie than for its commercial

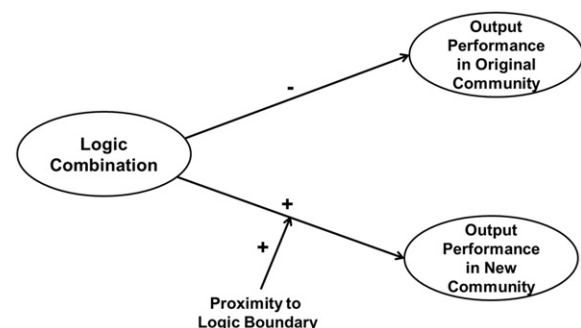


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

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