Article

Managing Unstable Institutional Contradictions: The Work of Becoming

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Abstract

An institution is often considered to be a stable, taken-for-granted 'being'. The consequence is that agency is primarily associated with the rather exceptional creation or disruption of a relatively stable structure. In this article, we suggest an alternative ontology for understanding an institution as something unstable and always 'becoming'. This opens a range of new and distinct opportunities for theorizing and researching institutional work involved in the everyday practice of managing institutional complexity. It allows us, in this study, to contribute with a new form of agency in terms of the continuous, active work of managing novel contradictions. Further, it induces us to take a more fine-grained look at the accompanying dynamics of work, in addition to work itself, whereby we provide a novel way of accounting for whether work effort is amplifying or subsiding, and whether it is likely to result in greater or lesser volatility within – on the surface – an otherwise seemingly stable institution. The argumentation is supported by an ethnographic field study of the work of managing novel contradictions within a single South Korean credit card company in the aftermath of the Asian economic crisis in 1997.

Keywords

becoming, contradictions, institutional logic, institutional work, South Korea

Introduction

Field-level institutions compel organizational changes, as organizations acquire societal legitimacy by complying with institutional logics that characterize their environments (Kraatz & Block, 2008; Van Gestel & Hillebrand, 2011). In fields with pluralistic logics, organizations are likely to

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be rife with internal political tensions, fragmentation and instability (Battilana & Dorado, 2011; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Pache & Santos, 2010; Yu, 2013). Multiple logics constitute potentially contradictory organizing principles for organizational action and cognition that negate unity of command (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Jarzabkowski, Matthiesen, & Van de Ven, 2009; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Organizations in such fields must often balance a need to adapt to the pluralistic demands of their institutional referents and an integrity imperative to build and maintain internal, micro-institutional orders of organization (Kraatz & Block, 2008).

Much scholarly attention has lately been accorded to the strategies and systems that organizations mobilize to strike a sustainable balance among the multiple logics they incorporate (Battilana & Dorado, 2011; Pache & Santos, 2013b). Previous research suggests largely organizational-structural mechanisms of managing institutional complexity (Smets & Jarzabkowski, 2013) and has often focused on the longer-term response strategies of actors higher up in an organization (Kellogg, 2011), while leaving the little, mundane, yet potentially effortful work of managing complexity at lower levels under-theorized (Barley, 2008; Pache & Santos, 2013a; Smets & Jarzabkowski, 2013). Scant research has thus been granted to the practice of managing institutional complexity in the course of everyday work and to how coexisting logics are balanced by organization members in ways that maintain both logics (Smets, Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2012). Yet, confronting this void in the research is of substantive relevance for a broad range of organizations that must survive and thrive as arenas of contradictions (Pache & Santos, 2013b), and which maintain their hybrid features over time (Smets & Jarzabkowski, 2013).

Advancing understanding of how organizations sustain hybrid institutional features over time, we suggest, requires more theorization and empirical study of the dynamics of ongoing efforts exerted in the everyday work of managing contradictions. Nascent research, for example, in a traditional and rather homogeneous institution, the Cambridge University Boat Club, alludes to the importance of better understanding the process of institutional maintenance work and its shifting degree of effortfulness (Lok & de Rond, 2013). Yet, it is underscored that 'it would be particularly useful to examine whether and how institutional maintenance processes operate in more mundane and more fragile institutions' (Lok & de Rond, 2013, p. 205). Little research has been devoted to such work dynamics in the course of mundane, day-to-day work practice when organizations are exposed to fresh, and thus often unsteady, institutional complexity (Barley, 2008; Bechky, 2011; Lawrence, Leca, & Zilber, 2013; Smets, Morris, & Greenwood, 2012). Knowledge of such dynamics may prove particularly important for volatile situations when, for instance, organizations are exposed to sudden, abrupt changes in their macro-environment, and shifts between different, yet often interrelated, forms of work must be swift. The present article's intent is to fill parts of these interrelated voids in scholarly knowledge of the dynamics of institutional work efforts, in addition to work itself, involved in the everyday practice of managing unstable, contradictory logics when an organization is exposed to novel institutional complexity. Accordingly, the question to be confronted by this article is: *How is institutional work, with its accompanying dynamics, involved in the everyday practice of managing unstable institutional contradictions?*

By proposing an alternative ontology for understanding an institution as something unstable and becoming, this article advances the emerging body of institutional scholarship on the micro-sources of institutional continuity and change (Dacin, Munir, & Tracey, 2010; Hallett, Shulman, & Fine, 2010; Heaphy, 2013; Lok & de Rond, 2013; Rojas, 2010). We ground the study of institutions in a social ontology of continuous becoming (Barth, 1981; Sztompka, 1991; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) in which change is seen as ceaseless and pervasive, and society as something that 'happens' rather than 'is', recreated afresh in every social encounter (Giddens, 1976; Schatzki, 2006). This re-theorization of institutions allows us, in this research, to make two important contributions to furthering understanding of the institutional work that occurs within an organization when exposed to

novel institutional complexity. First, we uncover new and different forms of agency in terms of the rather trivial, yet highly consequential, day-to-day work demanded of managers and employees as they continuously manage institutional contradictions in practice. Second, a becoming lens induces us to account for the dynamics of work efforts that accompany this work. We thereby provide a novel way of understanding how and whether the need for institutional effort to maintain contradictions is amplifying or subsiding, and whether this is likely to result in higher or lower volatility within – on the surface – an otherwise seemingly stable institution.

We support our argumentation by reporting an ethnographic field study of the work of managing institutional contradictions at a South Korean credit card company exposed to conflicting institutional demands in the aftermath of the Asian economic crisis in 1997. Organizations were subjected to multiple logics as the Korean organizational field was exposed to economic reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The development of contradictory logics in the Korean field gave rise to social struggles in some companies to define the direction and aim of the institutional changes and the logic combinations that emerged (Powell & Colyvas, 2008). The reported findings thus examine the institutional change processes taking place within a company during a real-life transition phase of macro-institutional restructuring from hierarchical, collectivistic Asiatic schemes of organization and management toward more liberal, egalitarian Western logics of management. The integration of an American logic into Korean organizations was embodied concretely in practices that Bae (1997) and Bae and Lawler (2000) refer to as 'new human resource management' in Korea. In the organizational setting of our case, the contradiction between managing by objectives and the Confucian management style is central. This might have been understood as an instance of a new American-influenced logic of management being disseminated, with traditional Korean organizational practices being de-institutionalized and becoming 'unfashionable'. However, matters were more complex, and powerful organization members who faced tensions from conflicts in field-level institutional prescriptions expended efforts in building a new bridging institution to pursue symbolic recognition and economic reward, and worked increasingly harder at maintaining it. The reported study provides a rare view into the escalating efforts involved in maintaining the appearance of a sustainable balance of coexisting, yet potentially contradictory, logics in a very mundane and fragile institution on the verge of exploding from pressures from within – a difficult situation between creating novel and accomplishing routine institutional complexity in the aftermath of macroeconomic crisis (Jarzabkowski, Smets, Bednarek, Burke, & Spee, 2013; Kraatz & Block, 2008).

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. First, we outline the theoretical and ontological background for theorizing and researching how institutional work is involved in managing contradictory logics, drawing inspiration from literature that grants ontological priority to becoming over being. This is followed by an account of the ethnographic methodology used. Then we present the empirical case. Finally, we discuss and compare the argument with adjacent lines of work in the institutional literature on the work of managing institutional complexity, and suggest paths for research which future studies may profitably explore.

Theoretical and Ontological Background

The institutional work and institutional logics perspectives serve as complementary ways of orienting analysis; both draw inspiration from practice-based organizational scholarship to elucidate the recursive interaction between macro-institutional processes and the lived experiences and everyday practices of organizational actors (Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2010; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012; Zilber, 2013). The institutional work agenda shifts the focus of research toward the mundane and more modest efforts of social actors to revise the structures they inhabit (Lawrence et al., 2010). The institutional logics approach accounts for the heterogeneity in fields,

organizations and individuals (Thornton et al., 2012). We build upon and expand these bodies of literature by inscribing institutions and agency into a social ontology of becoming in which institutions, as 'social forms' (Barley, 2008; Hughes, 1936), are considered momentary effects of and for action (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). That a particular form of institutional logics emerges momentarily in an organization, and gains a degree of relative coherence, is therefore what needs to be explained (an *explanandum*), rather than being something serving as *explanans* (Czarniawska, 2009; Jarzabkowski, Lê, & Feldman, 2012; Latour, 2005; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Zilber, 2011). In this way, we further the emerging body of scholarship grounded in a practice approach to institutional complexity and work (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013).

Managing unstable contradictory logics: institutional work practices and dynamics

Institutional logics define institutions' cultural content and can be considered a form of not only cultural (Swidler, 1986), but also practical 'tool kits' (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013) upon which actors draw to construct diverse logic combinations in dealing with various problems (Pache & Santos, 2013b; Thornton et al., 2012). They refer to particular means–ends frames – that is, the means that are considered appropriate for achieving particular goals in a field of activity (Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2005). To date, most research on the organizational management of institutional complexity treats coexisting institutional logics often as either compatible or incompatible per se (Smets & Jarzabkowski, 2013). The present research builds upon and advances emergent understanding of how complexity is managed through ongoing work of construing, changing and maintaining logic elements, and the varying relations between them (Smets & Jarzabkowski, 2013), their relative degree of incompatibility and interdependence in particular configurations, and the resulting shifts in effortfulness.

Early contributions considered institutions and their logics as relatively stable, self-reproducing social facts, whereby the interesting question became how change can be accomplished by heroic entrepreneurs despite strong pressures toward stasis (Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). It is increasingly recognized that fields and organizations are replete with various forms of institutional complexity (Kraatz & Block, 2008), such as contradictions, the reflective awareness of which enables embedded actors (e.g. those disadvantaged by existing arrangements) to shift from passively reproducing stable, taken-for-granted structures to changing the present order (Battilana et al., 2009; Seo & Creed, 2002).

The institutional work approach, however, has systemized existing, otherwise disparate lines of work, and recently has directed scholarly attention to explanations other than the more structural accounts of taken-for-granted stability (Jepperson, 1991), accounts which take institutional stability as a product of passive reproduction and agency as a feature of the rather exceptional disruption, change or creation of institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lok & de Rond, 2013). Inscribing institutions into an ontology of becoming extends these concerns by refocusing our attention towards the ongoing work of both regulating and reconfiguring institutional logic combinations as they are actively performed in everyday practice. The interesting question, then, becomes less whether actions conform to norms or deviate from them, but rather how institutional logics are invoked to serve often more immediate, practical purposes (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013), whether actors actively over- or underperform logics and, in this process, regularize or reconfigure them (Feldman, 2003; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Jarzabkowski et al., 2009; Lok & de Rond, 2013). The under-explored work of accomplishing continuity in institutional logic configurations (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Scott, 2008) would, when viewed through a lens of becoming, demand continuous institutional effort to (re)produce an institutional order as 'the same', thereby leading to institutional continuity and predictability.

In general, institutional maintenance involves the work of supporting and recreating the mechanisms that lead to social compliance and reproduction (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Zilber, 2009). Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) differentiate among various categories of institutional work that ensure compliance (enabling, policing and deterring work) and forms of work that accomplish reproduction (valorizing/demonizing, mythologizing, embedding and routinizing). Furthermore, they suggest that maintaining institutions likely requires work that in one way or another conceals or 'repairs' the contradictions that otherwise tend to generate ongoing tensions in and transformations of institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Seo & Creed, 2002; Sminia, 2011). As this study will demonstrate, however, this work is never all-encompassing or hegemonic, and often will be challenged by new areas of ambiguity, manipulation and inconsistency as other actors work to surface contradictions, potentially demanding a response of increased effort by those seeking to maintain contradictions. A key dynamic of institutional work as situated in everyday practice of managing contradictory logics, we argue, pertains to how actors are able to continuously and often rapidly scale up or down the level of institutional efforts expended as the demands for work amplify or subside.

In this study, we view these processes of work on accomplishing continuity and change in institutional logic configurations as interrelated, co-constitutive (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) and continuously evolving. Yet, they also amplify or subside in intensity as multiple actors work on disrupting or maintaining configurations of logics in institutional politics and competition over status, power and various forms of symbolic and economic capital (e.g. gifts, promotions and business travel in the present study) (Bourdieu, 1990; Rojas, 2010; Swidler, 1986; Van Gestel & Hillebrand, 2011).

This conceptual grounding implies attentiveness to the constant and even the most mundane work of managers and employees at all levels with the particular logic formations that emerge in an organization exposed to multiple institutional demands of a field: why actors do institutional work, the shifts in the amount of effort, how actors legitimize it, and how others react. Hence, in this re-theorization, there is a notion that institutions are not necessarily characterized by stability. Rather, change, disorganization and chaos may be the more natural conditions of an organization – caused by either internal or external circumstances – and it requires effort to ensure at least the appearance of stability in the institutions of organizations (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). By presenting the findings of an ethnographic field study, we illustrate the value of this ontological and theoretical grounding for providing new and distinct insights into the 'work' of becoming in managing novel institutional complexity.

Methodology

The theoretical underpinnings that served as a sensitizing framework for this study (Blumer, 1954) called for an ethnographic methodology as a methodological implication of taking a practice perspective (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007). Such a methodology captures the roles of human agency and vested interests in maintaining and changing institutional forms through everyday practice (Barley, 2008; Bjerregaard & Lauring, 2012). Organizational ethnographies allow us to consider organizational interactions not merely as illustrative of institutional patterns, but as constitutive of such patterns by following social interactions as they sediment into institutional orders (Bjerregaard, 2011; Evens & Handelman, 2006; Van Velsen, 1967). In this vein, the theoretical orientation of the research towards the ongoing work of accomplishing unstable institutional formations was complemented by the ethnographic approach, whose end goal was not to reveal and arrive at a given (morphological) pattern in terms of structural regularities (Flyvbjerg, 2001). This analytical approach required a relaxation of any sharp distinction between theory and the analysis of empirical material (see Agar, 1986; Latour, 2005).

Based on nearly four months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2002, we use primary data from 42 semi-structured interviews with local managers (4) and employees (31), as well as managers at the headquarters (7) of a Korean credit card company. The resulting information was corroborated by three months of full-time participant observational data (740 hours). The interviews and participant observation yielded a database of several hundred pages of transcripts, field notes and photos, along with excerpts from company documents, etc. Triangulating these data sources could provide insight into the different yet interconnected domains of actions and logics (Holy & Stuchlik, 1983; Powell & Colyvas, 2008; Zilber, 2002). In contrast, a focus at the top of organizations may cause one to lose sight of how institutional maintenance and change is critically dependent on the more modest, yet highly consequential efforts of those at the coalface or frontlines of organizations (Barley, 2008; Reay, Golden-Biddle, & Germann, 2006).

These data were initially collected with broad research questions, whose focus was gradually narrowed as the researcher learned more about the central issues related to the local context. In practice, this meant that the researcher was able to develop themes proposed by the informants (Alvesson, 2003) and thereby to combine the informants' views with systematized data generation (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

Organizational setting

The sudden, significant changes in the macro-environment of Korean organizations following the Asian economic crisis made it a relevant locus to study how organizational actors manage novel institutional complexity. The Suwon branch of the ACB Company in Korea was selected for fieldwork for two reasons. First, as a credit card company, ACB was greatly influenced by the requirements for change advanced by the IMF and the Korean banking system. At the time of the fieldwork in 2002, some years after the Asian economic crisis, the company was striving to keep its position as one of the best non-Chaebol credit card companies in a time of heavy crisis in which banks were being closed, personal bankruptcies became a headache for credit card companies, and, in particular, the Chaebol-owned credit card companies and banks were under severe pressure for more transparent relations, which created competitive tension in the credit card field. Second, the Suwon branch in particular was nominated as the best-run branch in the entire corporation, and much was at stake in the change process. Thus, this particular branch was an interesting place to study the work that occurs in the face of novel complexity following what top management was describing as a successful transition to newer, Western logics of management practices. The ACB Company was a comparatively large corporation, with around 2,000 employees divided among a headquarters and 11 branches. The Suwon branch had 35 employees, including four managers, divided into three teams on three levels.

Interviews

The formal interviews were carried out in the informants' offices or in empty meeting rooms. All employees of the local branch were interviewed, in a combination of Korean and English. The interviews, which lasted between one and two hours, loosely followed an interview guide to ensure that certain topics were addressed and linked coherently while letting the informant take the lead (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). All of the interviews were taped, transcribed and coded.

First, the interview guide contained a number of general questions about change processes, values and norms of management styles and HRM practices. After a while, however, more locally grounded questions developed that dealt with such themes as the significance of social relations, positions, and the local acquisition of recognition and resources. Such questions were not

Table 1. Categorizations of interviews.

Interview table	Number	Length (approx.)
Branch general manager	1	1 hour
Branch team leaders	3	1 hour, 1 hour, 2 hours
Team leaders at headquarters	4 (2 were former GM branch managers at other branches)	Each 1 hour
Permanent employees at headquarters	3	Each 1 hour
Service team members	10 (3 were permanent employees)	Between 1 and 2 hours
Marketing and PR team members	5 (2 were permanent employees)	Between 1 and 2 hours
Collecting team members	14 (4 were permanent employees)	Each 1 hour
Collection service employees (part of collecting team, all on piece work pay)	2	Each 1 hour

developed before entering the setting; they occurred spontaneously during the interaction with the informants. Table 1 summarizes the types of interviews made.

Participant observation

Participant observation was carried out by one of the authors at the workplace, as well as at numerous social gatherings after working hours. Thus, the researcher's entire person and pre-understandings were subjected to exposure to the field under study (Agar, 1986; Goffman, 1989). The role of the researcher in the field under investigation provides the foundation from which data are built. The main relationship between the researcher and the field was the role of observer-as-participant (Junker, 1960). As documented in ethnographic literature, however, fieldworker roles are never entirely static, nor are they under the full control of the field researcher (e.g. Whyte, 1993). Altogether, the degree of observation and participation actually occurring depended on the different situations and activities. On working days, a great deal of time was spent walking around the workplace and making 'small talk' with the employees in an attempt to gain their trust. During business meetings, it was mostly observation that took place; in social gatherings, it was mainly participation. In addition, notes on numerous conversations with managers and employees were jotted down in a small notebook that was kept in a pocket at all times. Table 2 provides an overview of the observation types, which also indicates, on a continuum, whether it was primarily characterized by observation or participation. Observations generated knowledge on the doing of institutional work in everyday social interactions (Barley, 2008). These observation types are moreover distinguished in time, where the first month's participant observation was relatively more explorative, aimed at obtaining an overview of, for example, work assignments and the different persons' background and interaction with colleagues. The following months' observations were more elaborative and focused on, for example, the work of managing Korean and American logics and daily debates, such as concerning the atmosphere at lunch and recent developments of the branch.

The researcher who collected the data is of Danish nationality but was originally adopted from Korea. This is important to the study. On the one hand, the Danish background provides distance from the investigated institutional setting, decreasing the risk of 'home-blindness'. On the other hand, her physical appearance, knowledge of behavioural patterns, and language skills allowed her to be closely integrated into the groups of employees. Thus a so-called 'third position' was achieved between the informants' and the researcher's own perspectives (Hastrup, 1986).

Table 2. Categorizations of types of observations.

Observation types	Explorative/first month	Elaborative/following months
Observations of work assignments	Front-desk service Phone calls Collegial and manager supervision	MBO system and registrations Collection-day tours Front-desk service Phone calls Collegial and manager supervision
Observations at team and branch meetings	Few team meetings, primarily at the collection team	Team meetings, all three teams Branch meetings (also with leaders from the Head Office)
Participation in minor work assignments	Office odd jobs	Promotion campaigns Minor translation jobs
Participation in lunch	Formal lunches for teams	Informal lunches with different employee groups
Participation in after-office hours	Formal team celebrations (birthdays, farewell and welcome parties)	Daily dinners Formal team celebrations Wedding Private leisure time (sauna, movie theatre)
Participation in company outings	ACB Company fall outing	'Twin' branch get-together day Company exam celebrations (for young permanently hired employees)

Analysis

During and after data collection, notes were created on emergent themes and questions. The combined data material was originally coded for substantive themes and patterns relevant to both processes (e.g. changes in the intensity and interrelations of work practices) and forms of institutional work (e.g. categories of embedding, policing, etc.), while we searched for continuities and mutations in the configuration of logics being created and maintained. Twenty-four main field codes were each divided into two to six subcodes (see Miles & Huberman, 1994; Spradley, 1980). These codes comprised patterns of meaning interpreted in the data material, both empirically and theoretically derived, and served mainly to orient the greater analytical process of interpretation. This analytical process rested heavily on 'reflexive triangulation' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), in which different sorts of data (Flick, 2007) were continuously added to the same themes to develop 'thick descriptions' of the work performances involved in managing contradictions. Hence, accounting for purposes and motives (by analysing data from participation and interviews) was useful for obtaining an understanding of institutional work practices from the perspective of the institutional actors (Weber, 1978). But the effects of institutional work forming the basis for the subsequent process of work were beyond the intention and control of any one actor. These dynamic effects we assessed by analysing observations of work in ongoing social interactions. In the full empirical material, we find a vast number of institutional work activities that lead to an outcome opposite to that intended by the actor involved. In the analysis, we charted both practices and processual sequences of institutional work involved in managing contradictions. Triangulation of actors' interpretations of work practices and observed dynamics of work together revealed how work was involved in continuously managing contradictions and how potential shifts in intensity could occur. Based

on this analytical process, a case narrative was constructed (Flyvbjerg, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Context of the study: the emergence of a heterogeneous field

Much research has concluded that, in the aftermath of the Asian economic crisis and the IMF intervention, one particular organizational form was spread out across the national landscape of Korean companies. In most business studies, the organization of Korean companies has been depicted as incarnating Confucian principles based on the key concepts of family, harmony and hierarchy (Gudykunst, 2004; Oh & Kim, 2002). The family, in Confucianism, is perceived to be the entity toward which people feels the greatest responsibility and loyalty (Lett, 1998; Na, 1997). It has often been mentioned that companies have incorporated this family analogy so that employees are to consider themselves members of the greater corporate family (Jandt, 2001; Janelli, 1996; Kim, 1999). Hence, Korean organizations often use family values to describe the social structure of the workplace (Rowley, Sohn, & Bae, 2002).

A second feature of the Confucian organization comprises ideals of social relations as being harmonious. Scholars have characterized the survival and progress of Korean organizations as traditionally being influenced by long-term group harmony (see Chang, 1999; Song & Meek, 1998; Ungeson, Steers, & Park, 1999). The ideal Confucian organization is, thus, characterized first by close, family-like social ties between individuals, and second by relationships between organizational members which are harmonious, stable and free of conflict (Kim & Park, 2003). The harmonious, family-oriented cooperation in Korean companies has traditionally been grounded in a hierarchical structure, in which all act in accordance with their respective positions. According to the literature, vertical relationships between superiors and subordinates govern the bulk of worker interactions (Kim, Helgesen, & Ahn, 2002).

When acting within the frame of hierarchy, Koreans are supposed to have an intuitive feeling for social balance and harmony (Gudykunst, 2004; Janelli, 1996). In other words, social harmony and coherence between employees is crucial for maintaining smooth relations in hierarchically structured Korean organizations, and employees who bring feelings of stability into an organization are, consequently, highly valued (Chang, 1999; Oh & Kim, 2002). In this case, upholding the ideals of family-like relations within the company also means that superiors are obligated to track implicit sentiments of discontent within the group of subordinates and to try to solve problems (Song & Meek, 1998). Such notions of social structure have been common to studies of Korean management and organization (Janelli, 1996).

In the 1980s a number of East Asian countries surpassed the United States in economic growth, giving rise to the 'Asian economic miracle' (Dicken, 1999). South Korea's annual economic growth rose to 11 per cent in the beginning of the 1980s, defining Korea as one of the 'Asian tiger' economies. With the East Asian financial and economic crisis of 1997, however, which raised fears of world economic meltdown, a number of changes were introduced to Korean corporations. One circumstance was singled out for change because it was considered to be the cause not only of the rise of the Asian tiger economies, but also of their downfall: a special relationship between corporations and the state, in which the great family-owned conglomerates, the so-called 'Chaebols', were favoured by the national bank, resulting in a mix of institutions in which politics and economics were less divided than in most Western countries (Rhee & Chang, 2002; Rowley et al., 2002). As part of its rescue packages of Southeast Asian countries, the IMF provided Korea with a $55 billion loan conditioned on reform (Yergin & Stanislaw, 1998). The IMF, the state and the system of banks thus set out to restructure the economy and Westernize Korean managerial and organizational practices. The intent was to replace the tight bonds among the large

Table 3. Characterization of logics.

Characteristic	Korean logic	American logic	New harmonious-family logic
Economic system	Confucian/Asian-tiger economy	Managerial capitalism	Managerial capitalism with Confucian management logics
Structure of institutional field	Chaebols (and their subcontractors)	Corporations	Corporations
	Strong interdependency between private organizations and the government	Transparency in relations between private organizations and the government	Transparency in relations between private organizations and the government
Basis of mission and strategy	Build broad and large productions and competencies	Specialize	Specialize
	Increase Chaebol prestige	Compete with other specialized corporations	Compete with other specialized corporations
Sources of productivity	Communal/familial responsibility	Individual competition	Communal/familial responsibility *and* outward competition based on individual performance
Control of human capital/employee resources	Complex hierarchy of positions Systems of examinations to gain competencies (transferred from public governance to the private sector) Permanent or life-long employment	Organization in teams; flat positional structure Measures of performance (e.g. MBO) Temporary employment	Organization in teams; flat positional structure but with a collective responsibility as previously found in the hierarchy of older and younger Measures of performance (MBO) *and* measures of attachment to the company as family Temporary *and* permanent employment

conglomerates, the banks and the state with neoliberal economic principles of sound competition and transparency. Scholars have argued that, responding to IMF demands, Korean organizations replaced an older, relation-oriented management logic (lifetime attachment to the company, respect for seniority, and collectivism) with a new institutional logic based on competition-oriented values (individualistic values and transparency) (Lee, 1998; Park & Kim, 2005; Robertson & White, 2003). Furthermore, recent research has reported that, while Korean firms adopted new practices in search of legitimacy, they did not blindly imitate such practices (Kang & Yanadori, 2011). Hence, Korean firms aimed to achieve societal legitimacy as supporters of national reconstruction by signalling managerial and organizational change in accordance with the macro-demands of the new institutional logic. This gave rise to a heterogeneous field in which organizations faced tensions from contradictory institutional logics, reflected in the American style of egalitarian, individualistic forms of management and organization and the Korean style of collectivistic management and organization (see Table 3).

While research has concluded that one particular institutional form was spread among Korean companies in the aftermath of the crisis in a relatively predictable process, this study set out to investigate the particularities unveiled in the institutional work that went on in social struggles over contradictory logics within a company, in order to better account for the emergence and maintenance of the form of institutional logics that gained a degree of legitimacy in that company.

Findings: Work of Managing Unstable Institutional Contradictions

To accommodate the demands formulated by the IMF, the state and the system of banks, in the post-crisis years ACB launched efforts to develop a managerial style in which 'old-time family and friendship-like alliances have been replaced by rational leadership and individual performance' (company mission statement). The ACB Company did not, however, attempt to remove all the family bonds of Confucian-style management in favour of a more Western-style management. The preservation of strong bonds to the company was expressed by the company motto *Seuseuro saeropkae takachi* ('by oneself, renewal, all together'). As such, the motto expressed an attempt to strike an ideal balance between the two institutional logics: the older orientation toward relationships and the newly introduced orientation toward competition according to the managerial standards institutionalized in the wider organizational field of Korea. It was a balance intended to combine individual competition and collective cooperation while removing structural inertia and hierarchy and retaining common loyalty, responsibility and cooperation.

Creating the company as a harmonious family: institutional work by identity (re)construction

The employees and managers of the company consequently initiated institutional work of theorizing to harmoniously integrate the different institutional logics pertaining to what was considered the usual Confucian management style and what was considered a new Western management style. When discussing management practices in the organization, however, employees would often distinguish between *migukeuro* ('American style') and *hangukeuro* ('Korean style'). The two different styles were being constructed in daily conversation as complete opposites. One example of construing the logics as completely contradictory was provided by an employee who tried to explain a fellow co-worker's rather obstinate behaviour toward his superior:

> You know, it is not *hangukeuro* ['Korean-style'] to act like this towards your boss. It is not the way we used to do it before, but now we have a new and more flat organization; it is really *migukeuro* ['American-style'].

The employee refused to take over another employee's work area, which he did not find himself fit to do since it involved making delicate calls to, for example, brothels and bars to check if persons who were unable to pay their debts on their credit card had used other means to spend money at such places.

The increasing concern with individual achievements, embodied in the institutional logic of the American-style management, was generally aimed at improving performance and signalling that the firm was proactively helping reconstruct Korean society. Hence, to achieve societal legitimacy, a range of managerial and organizational practices were developed and installed, aimed at imitating and copying these changes in the national field in accordance with the new institutional demands for organizing and managing, such as new, more objective and individualized measurement systems.

One of the most central new organizational initiatives, always termed 'American-style', was management by objectives (MBO). This system was adopted to better monitor the productivity of each branch, each team and each individual. For example, employees were now to be measured on their actual performance rather than on the hours they spent on the job. MBO results were particularly important in promotion and subsequent job rotation. This was, in accordance with the new corporate ideals, to be decided objectively through an evaluation of each individual's MBO results.

Not all, however, shared the general appreciation of the new 'American' system. The local award-winning managers in the Suwon branch found the MBO system too disruptive of cooperation in the workplace. As one of the local managers put it,

> I do not think that the Western style like the MBO is always that good. You know, it is very good for getting results. But it can ruin the *bunweegee* ['atmosphere'], because people are always fighting and are very selfish. They do not feel that they have to help each other and communicate. And I think that *bunweegee* is most important – then afterward come results. (Suwon manager)

According to the Suwon management, the Korean logic of management emphasizing organizational atmosphere and social integration was at least as important as the institutional logic of productivity achieved through individual competition. This had during the last couple of years led the Suwon managers to engage in work of disrupting headquarters' demands for change and subsequent re-theorization to formulate their own local interpretation of the headquarters' motto. They sought to reconcile the new individualistic institutional logic with a more communal attachment to the company.

Their work of disrupting headquarters' demands for change involved disconnecting how they selected employees locally to be job-rotated to headquarters or to better positions in other branches from the institutional logic underpinning the MBO system of individual performance rewards. The Suwon general manager (GM) had, during the previous year's job-rotation and promotions, decided that this should not be based on the individual's MBO score alone. Rather, the employees should vote for the persons who were found to contribute the most to the common good of the branch. The idea, according to the GM, was to sustain the Korean way's priority on attachment to the company. Thus, the results of the MBO-based individual evaluations in the branch were turned into a common project, and the managers saw to it that everybody in the branch was made dependent on the results of the general evaluation. Through this work of reformulating how the coexisting logics were normatively associated, the logic of individual achievement and competition was described much in terms of communal structures, even when related to institutional practices comprising individual evaluations, such as the MBO.

Based upon the equivocal motto of the headquarters, the managers thus claimed authority to create their own constructive balance between the two otherwise seemingly conflicting institutional logics. During pep talks at team meetings and branch meetings, they had gradually enforced a new, common institutional logic of cooperation, built up under the name of the 'harmonious family' through institutional work of identity (re)construction. This was often described by employees and managers as a Korean-style practice recreated by necessity to cope with the American logic of management. In coping with the new institutional demands of a competitive, individualistic scheme of management, one of the managers expressed the necessity as follows: 'Nowadays there is so much competition, so it will help to be like a *hwahapeun kachogee* [harmonious family] to overcome it.' Another manager emphasized the Korean national culture in relation to this ideal:

> I like to say that we [at the branch] are a *hwahapeun kachogee* [harmonious family]. You know, *uri naraae* [in our country] it is all about family being most important to us. You must be loyal to your family.

The logic of social harmony, loyalty and organizational coherence was then, as expressed by the management, valued more highly than the logic incarnating individual opportunities. Yet, in their work of constituting the 'company-as-family', the managers still had to live up to the company's demands for good MBO results, and so they maintained a family-like loyal responsibility of cooperating to achieve financial results. In this way, the relation between the logics was construed as contradictory, yet complementary, and as serving the common good of the branch.

Maintaining the company as harmonious family for the common good: routinizing contradictory yet complementary logics

The Suwon branch had for more than a year been nominated the best branch in the company, which had led to bonuses and promotions. This was based primarily on the branch's common MBO score. Recent quarterly MBO scores, however, showed that the branch risked losing its position by not reaching sales and collection targets. Due to these worsened MBO scores, the managers urged each employee to work long days up to the next quarterly and year-ending MBO score and withdrew many weekend days off in order to promote better MBO scores. The yearly job-rotations, including promotions, were waiting on the end of the next quarterly MBO results. After long days of hard work, the Suwon managers would reward the employees with expensive dinners. Thus, it was observed how the managers and employees spent their evenings on socializing after extended days of hard work on improving their MBO scores. The managers used a strategy of long working hours combined with late-night drinking parties and other social events, such as outings to Korean saunas and sports games, to maintain the family-like atmosphere during times of mostly hard work. Yet, the strategy of having employees spend a great deal of time at social gatherings was meant not only to achieve social integration by socializing work, but more importantly to simultaneously increase productivity and sustain the extended working hours. Hence, this work served as ongoing 'bridging activities' by which performing one logic was used to support the performance of the other logic (Smets, Jarzabkowski et al., 2012) and build and maintain bridges between established and upcoming institutions through continuous 'bridging' interactions and work. Thus, what would normally appear as institutional work of socializing within the 'harmonious family', at lunches held in smaller groups or at dinners held on special occasions, such as birthdays or celebration of good monthly MBO results, was during these months mobilized much more frequently and strategically to boost the MBO-related productivity. Previously, occasional outings often involved fewer participants and not necessarily the managers, whereas they now were mobilized as daily events by managers. As one of the managers put it: 'I think it is important to make my workers have a good time together after hours as well. Then they will not be sorry to work so hard.'

The managers were often trying to convince employees that their hard work would benefit all of their colleagues by ensuring that the branch could keep its yearly MBO measured first place and, thus, once again receive yearly bonuses and future promotions. At a team meeting, one of the temporarily hired collectors was scolded for having shown insufficient MBO results: 'You are letting your whole team down. Do not apologize to me but to your team, which now has to work even harder to compensate.' The collector bowed in apology to the rest of the team. The collector tried very hard to improve his results after this incident, which he emphasized to the researcher on a joint collecting day-trip, where more meetings than usual had been scheduled. Moreover, it was also observed how the collector in the next couple of weeks after this meeting would invite his team on lunch although it was not his turn, or would bring snacks on a special celebration day (pepero-day) to the whole branch, perhaps by this trying to apologize to the team and the branch.

Hence, the Korean logic of social attachment combined with the American logic requiring good individual MBO results seemed, at first, to succeed in making the employees feel responsible for the company as a whole. As one employee described it:

> Here, we cannot just go home after work; we have to go out to drink and eat or work overtime. We spend a lot of time in the company. We don't have time to meet our old friends from university, and we get estranged from them once we have entered the company. This is difficult, but we don't have any interest in that anymore – just in the company. I like that *chibchak* [attachment] to the company. (Suwon employee)

Although the managers' way of managing contradictory logics were informal, over the following couple of months, they seemed to become 'officialized' in Bourdieu's (1977) sense, meaning that the Suwon managers emphasized the branch's common good in turning their locally instituted practices into formal rules to be followed through acts of institution in the active sense of the term. The local managers of the Suwon branch thus instituted their own interpretation of the balance between what they perceived as Western and Eastern institutional logics of management. Here, the harmonious family was selected as the official institutional norm for the branch's working practices. Using the family metaphor, the managers tried to increase productivity by creating collective responsibility for financial results and the individual MBO score, which they argued was to the benefit of all members of the 'family'. A collectively felt responsibility for all employees to put in extra work efforts to improve the branch's general MBO evaluation was, in this way, created by the leaders and accepted by the employees.

The *chibchak*, attachment to the company, however, did not come easily. Maintaining the company as a harmonious family, which worked hard together in order to improve the MBO results, demanded continuous institutional effort through ongoing embedding and socializing work of infusing the normative foundations of the institution into employees' everyday practices and simultaneously boosting productivity. Participation in an increasing number of company outings, sporting events, drinking parties and other social events was, during the following couple of months, reinforced as obligatory, even though they were held at night when employees were supposed to be off work after extended work hours. This can be illustrated by a comment that one of the managers made about participation in a late-night drinking party: 'You know, everybody in my team will come tonight. Even Mr Choi will come, although it is his holiday, because I said so.' Mr Choi did join us at the party, although he had been away on a rare vacation. Hence, the managers made coercive demands to ensure that the employees constantly were made part of the socializing routines during this intense period of work and socializing.

During team meetings, the managers would also particularly valorize some of the temporarily hired employees' great role in sustaining the branch's position as the best in the company through their important socializing work and integration of the branch into a harmonious family united in times of MBO crisis. Specifically, one female collector, Eun Keong, was singled out as central to the social integration because of her hard work at the office and at the after-work parties, where she made sure that everybody had enough to drink and convinced the other young female employees to be at the parties and ensure a good social atmosphere. After a special effort from Eun Keong to have the whole branch have fun, participate in sports games, and cheer at each other at the whole company's Fall Outing (where everybody wore shirts with the print 'ACB Company is my life'), her team leader put it: 'Eun Keong is really a *mobom* [role model]. I want to commend her for her endless efforts for our family.' In a later interview, Eun Keong admitted, 'Well I really work very hard, but Mr. Park [my team leader] trusts me and always wants to hear my opinion. When he had to hire a new guy, he asked me, and I said, "Take him, take him," and he did.' Thus, for her efforts to act as a role model, she was also rewarded with a particular trustee position not often given to temporary employees.

Based on these findings, it could be seen that the managers did not merely make efforts to routinize the logic of the company as a harmonious family during times of hardship. They were also

involved in ongoing work of sustaining their contradictory, yet complementary form of logics by valorizing the common good of practices. Hence, they constantly legitimated their work of managing contradictions by reference to particular role-model persons and ways of living up to the official norms to create a common-good system in which American-style individual efforts to create good MBO results were argued to be beneficial for everyone in the branch if combined with the creation of a Korean-style harmonious family attachment.

Amplification of institutional work: tensions building between logics

Although the strategy of maintaining a harmonious family was argued to combine the best of individual performance and preservation of communal concerns, this arrangement was far from an advantage for all employees. During the months when the branch MBO scores needed to be improved, the temporary employees in particular were pressured even harder since many of them, as collectors, held key positions in regard to showing quick MBO improvements. This pressure involved several serious team-scolding meetings, more extended work hours, and on top of that, company dinners and social events intended to promote socializing and bring the family together in times of hardship, which resulted in tired collectors who had barely been home in bed before the next day's work and dinner parties began. However, after a couple of months of working in this fashion, the increased pressure aggravated unpleasant emotions, and more and more employees seemed to feel a need to complain openly about their worsened situations during smoking and lunch breaks. On one such occasion, the importance of the MBO to the managers alone was explicitly broached by the temporary employees. It was mentioned that the next quarterly MBO score was of particular importance to two of the managers because they both hoped to be promoted. One young temporary employee expressed to the researcher:

> I am not really part of the MBO. It doesn't really affect me and my salary. But it does matter to our manager because the MBO decides how he will be rewarded. So for the managers, the MBO is important, and they also want to make it important for us. They want us to improve the MBO for them. We all just work hard to help others get promoted. (Suwon employee)

It was no secret that temporary employees were not hired on equally beneficial terms to those of the permanent employees; for example, they were not able to gain promotions. However, it seemed that during these months of hard work on improving the MBO scores, the temporary employees began to complain more to their colleagues and the researcher about how the growing pressure on them to work hard for the common good of the branch was particularly unfair. They would not gain any direct benefits from the potential MBO improvements, and thus would not benefit from the expressed 'common' good of a family to which they did not fully belong. Some of the permanent employees even began to express worries that the temporary collectors were being pressured too much during this period. This was exemplified by how, although the permanent employees often showed loyalty to their company and managers' decisions, one of the permanent employees expressed doubts about the manager's noble motives in maintaining a hardworking and loyal workforce:

> You know, my manager doesn't really care about his workers, and I think that the *bunweegee* ['atmosphere'] in our team is becoming worse and worse. But he just cares about his own MBO results. You know, he wants to go to another branch and be promoted to GM. He also doesn't care about how things will go for the team if he gets promoted. Because, you see, he has now already milked the area for money, so it will be very hard for the next manager to get good results. (Suwon employee)

In response to the last couple of months of growing dissatisfaction and exposure of the self-serving, unbalanced relationships between contradictory logics, the managers scaled up policing efforts by emphasizing the constant threat of replacement as a reason why, if the harmonic family should not be dissolved, they all had to work harder to create good MBO results. As an example of the constant fear of not creating good MBO results induced by policing work, the female front-desk service workers were constantly evaluated over a period of a couple of weeks. The evaluation was conducted not only by their own but also by the other team leaders, who expressed that since things were not going well at the branch, they would have to cut down on the number of temporary service employees. The young females shed many tears at being scolded daily and argued that a couple of their colleagues were 'safe' because they were part of Eun Keong's dinner party group and thus protected by one of the other team leaders. Thus, it became clear to the female service employees that they had to support the harmonic family like the good role model Eun Keong if they wished to stay at the branch. Eventually, none were fired, but this resulted in the female service employees' always being present at the parties and even holding extravagant birthday parties for two of the team leaders.

The increased efforts expended by the branch to maintain a harmonious family in some cases backfired and worsened the atmosphere. Hence, after a couple of months in this fashion, one of the male temporary collectors and one of the male temporary service employees decided to apply for positions elsewhere, expressing that they were tired of the constant pressure, frequent scolding and lack of holidays in the branch and moreover were not in favour of Eun Keong's reign at the parties. This was a rather unheard-of situation, partly because in times of financial crisis it was not that easy to find another job, and partly because ACB Company was praised as one of the better companies because employees were able to take weekends off and were given reasonable performance-based pay as part of the company's integration of Western logics.

While it was increasingly effortful, the managers tried to keep up the family spirit by insisting on holding a number of farewell parties, expressing openly that the employees were leaving only because they had found positions closer to their homes; welcome parties were also held to greet the newly hired replacement team members. Although unpleasant emotions built up and were expressed during lunch hours, the managers explained that even more social gatherings were needed to ensure that old and new workers would get to know each other better in a way that kept the branch together as a harmonic family:

> We must be good at cooperation, and to do that, we must preserve harmony within the group. And if people do not know each other well and new people often come in, then the harmony will be broken, and that can be seen in the results. (Suwon manager)

At the same time, it was also mentioned that this harmonic family was needed in order to cooperate better to create MBO results. Thus, the managers did not give up on their work of reconciling the Korean and American styles, although this was criticized by the co-workers as being beneficial to no-one but the managers. At the dinner parties following the resignations of the two temporary employees, employees would increasingly work to expose the unbalanced, self-serving contradictory relationships between logic elements and widen emergent cracks and holes in the harmonious-family façade. They would complain in the bathroom or outside the restaurant about their heavy workload. More and more employees explicitly stated a desire to quit their jobs with a reference to the two daring temporary employees. Thus, dissatisfaction seemed to be contagious throughout the branch.

This tension and dissatisfaction with being overloaded with work to reach good MBO results primarily for the sake of managers' promotions peaked in a series of events fuelled by the

accumulated stress and unpleasant emotions. At one of the dinner parties, one senior permanent team member, who was very tired and very intoxicated, physically attacked his boss, scolding him for not taking sufficient care of his team members but rather just making them produce all the good results without living up to his responsibility as a team leader. By this time, some of the elderly permanently hired females had also refused to attend any more parties, arguing that after so much overtime they were too tired to 'babysit' their intoxicated male colleagues. Finally, at another party, a female permanently hired employee also accused one of the present managers and an older team member of not having taken proper care of their newest team member, although as leaders and *son-bae* (senior people), according to the Korean logic of communal attachment, they had a great responsibility to do so. Both the manager and the senior person seemed to acknowledge this, but they explained that they had been very busy creating MBO results for the benefit of the family. Thus, this employee was surfacing the new contradictions being created, which in turn induced the managers to scale up their concerted efforts to restore the company to being a harmonious family and mend emergent cracks within it, to the extent that social events themselves became extra work. This was also the feeling on one of the last days of the field work, when after the disastrous physical assault on his boss, the same employee dutifully gathered together with most of the branch to celebrate Eun Keong's wedding. At that time, the employee apologized to the researcher for his inappropriate behaviour, stating that it merely had to do with too much alcohol and that he and his team leader were now good friends. Yet, although all the employees and team leaders during the wedding showed a good ambience towards each other, some of the employees later on mentioned that the whole office had actually been forced by the team leaders to show up for Eun Keong's wedding. Many of the employees secretly expressed that they would rather have stayed at home with their (real) family and friends on one of their first weekend days away from the office. The result of these months of conflicts was that even the permanently hired employees began to leave the branch. For example, a young male used an excellent company exam score to be the first to become job-rotated to the head office, even though he had not been long at the branch. At that time, the rumour was that the general manager also wanted to leave and was applying to be transferred to another branch during the round of job rotation. In this way, a central strategy for both temporary and permanent employees became to disrupt the harmonious family by requesting to be transferred or by quitting their jobs. This led the remaining leaders and employees to work even harder to sustain their MBO scores.

The findings thus show how the managers mobilized multiple forms of institutional work and increased their effort to maintain the constellation of particular elements of the institutional logics of Korean-style and American-style management while altering or ignoring other elements. Despite attempts to recreate contradictions as being for the common good, tensions were building, along with growing dissatisfaction and work to expose them as self-serving, contradictory logic relationships, particularly among the temporary employees. As will be outlined below, this led the managers to further legitimize what employees perceived as dirty work as being for the common good and to make renewed use of contradictory logics.

Concealing institutional dirty work by blaming field conditions: logics as complete oppositions

The managers, when talking to the researcher and small groups of employees, would conceal their self-serving work of managing contradictions and the resulting cracks in the harmonious family by often blaming either the Korean style or the American style of management for the difficult conditions employees experienced. After the aforementioned disastrous parties, one manager argued that American-style management was to blame for creating such conflicts:

> You know, before, everybody would take more care of each other and not get into a fight. It is just because of the American style: it has changed all relationships. It gives us a more competitive mind. (Suwon manager)

Later, the same manager, during a lunch held to try to mend his bonds of responsibility to some of his team members, blamed the Korean-style logic as the reason that people had grown so dissatisfied with the hard communal work that was demanded of the branch to keep its position but not necessarily benefit the individual employees:

> I don't know if you can say that the Korean style is always good for the employees, because then they have no opportunity to work for themselves: that is the bad part of being a harmonious family. (Suwon manager)

By blaming the contradictory Korean and American styles, the managers tried to reframe the current tensions and dissatisfaction caused by their own maintenance of a new, contradictory and highly manipulated logic of a harmonious family into neutral institutional conditions stemming from the current situation of the Asian financial crisis. Thus, they began strategically 'switching' (Smets, Jarzabkowski et al., 2012) between logics construed as complete opposites and worked to conceal their self-serving strategies of maintaining a particular combination of logics by blaming the IMF and its macro-demands for change; all the while, it was generally known that two of the team leaders had tried to become job-rotated. The third team manager was searching for a similar position in a competing company to avoid both the local MBO crisis and the negative atmosphere of the branch. The institutional becoming of the branch in its growing volatility and crisis as well as the managers' efforts to explain and deal with such tensions, thus rested on the ongoing, increasingly harder work of (re)creating, restoring and concealing elements of contradictory logics. The process of work in managing contradictory institutional logics in ways that maintains elements of both logics is summarized in Figure 1. As the figure illustrates, the relations between logics were construed across a series of work cycles of continuously (re)producing logics as being completely opposite, contradictory yet complementary, unbalanced and opposite. The character of shifts in this work process varied. The emergence of the local harmonious family constellation of logics occurred more gradually, while later shifts were more dramatic. Yet the particular way logic elements were combined was shaped by the process history of previous controversies and struggles over legitimate logics.

While the constellation of logics required ongoing work and was never merely sustained through passive, taken-for-granted reproduction even when held in a complementary relationship, the demanded work effort was amplified in these processes of continuously regulating and breaking logics. In times of falling MBO scores, an unbalanced way of managing contradictions officialized as being for the common good placed escalating pressure on permanent employees and temps to generate MBO results and perform at an increasing number of social gatherings in a vicious spiral, with tensions building between logics and employees' growing sentiments of feeling worn out. The institutional work effort of managers was raised in response to employees' work of bringing to the surface this way of managing contradictions as serving the managers' interests. Unintended, opposite consequences of institutional maintenance work by managers in response to employees' work of exposing contradictions and cracks in the harmonious family form of logics further amplified the work of maintaining a harmonious yet productive family. All actors of the branch thus worked on combining the institutional logics that the company had integrated from the national organizational field. The narrative demonstrates, as summarized in Table 4, these dynamics of changing
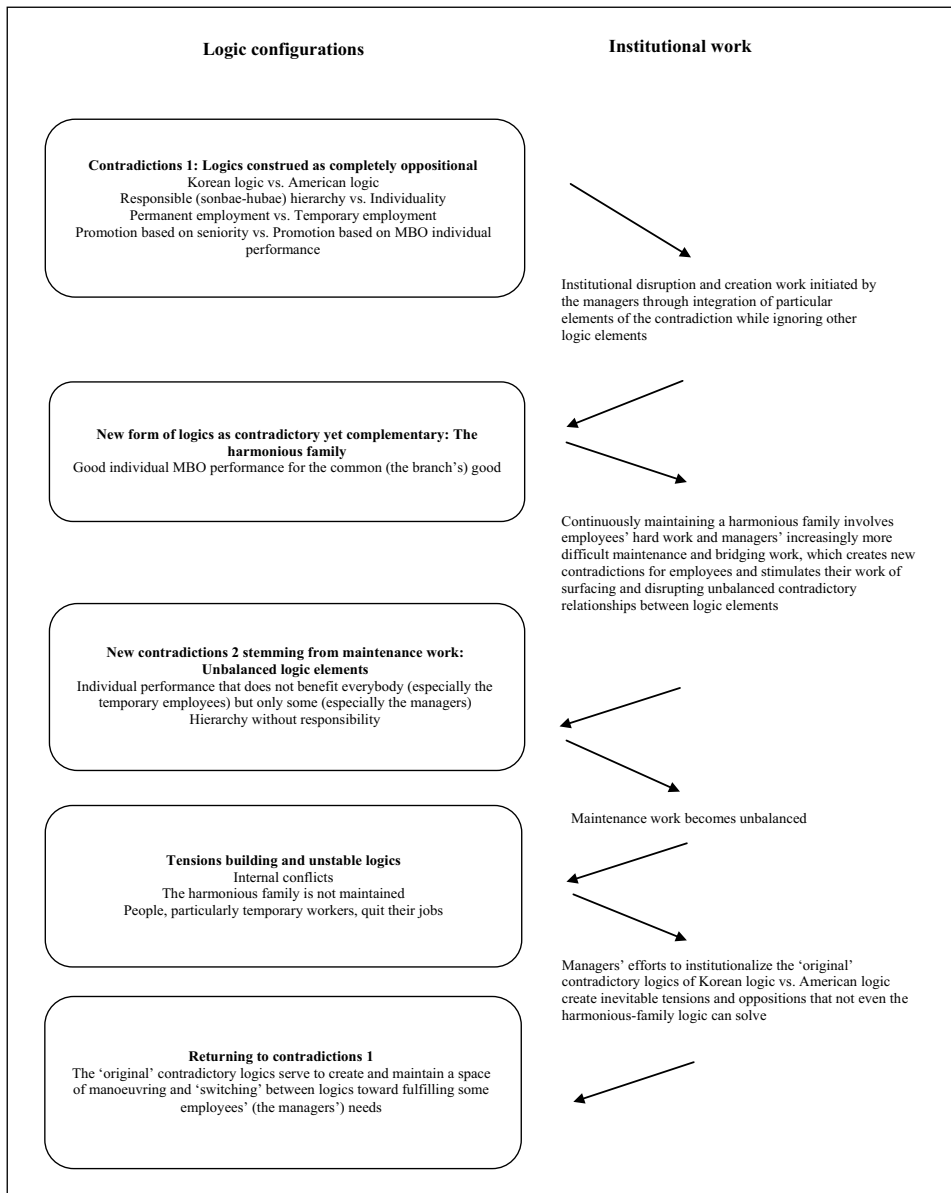
Logic configurations

Institutional work

> **Contradictions 1: Logics construed as completely oppositional**
> Korean logic vs. American logic
> Responsible (sonbae-hubae) hierarchy vs. Individuality
> Permanent employment vs. Temporary employment
> Promotion based on seniority vs. Promotion based on MBO individual performance

Institutional disruption and creation work initiated by the managers through integration of particular elements of the contradiction while ignoring other logic elements

> **New form of logics as contradictory yet complementary: The harmonious family**
> Good individual MBO performance for the common (the branch's) good

Continuously maintaining a harmonious family involves employees' hard work and managers' increasingly more difficult maintenance and bridging work, which creates new contradictions for employees and stimulates their work of surfacing and disrupting unbalanced contradictory relationships between logic elements

> **New contradictions 2 stemming from maintenance work: Unbalanced logic elements**
> Individual performance that does not benefit everybody (especially the temporary employees) but only some (especially the managers)
> Hierarchy without responsibility

Maintenance work becomes unbalanced

> **Tensions building and unstable logics**
> Internal conflicts
> The harmonious family is not maintained
> People, particularly temporary workers, quit their jobs

Managers' efforts to institutionalize the 'original' contradictory logics of Korean logic vs. American logic create inevitable tensions and oppositions that not even the harmonious-family logic can solve

> **Returning to contradictions 1**
> The 'original' contradictory logics serve to create and maintain a space of manoeuvring and 'switching' between logics toward fulfilling some employees' (the managers') needs

Figure 1. The process of managing contradictory logics and logic reconfigurations.

work efforts and the relevance of differentiating between work practices by their purpose from the perspective of the institutional workers (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006) on the one hand, and, on the other hand, their dynamic, often opposite effects and the resulting volatility in an institution. The process of work in managing contradictions has consequences for the required intensity and resourcefulness of work practices themselves, as previous work on combining contradictory logics may lead subsequent work efforts to amplify or subside in intensity.

Table 4. Institutional work practices in managing contradictions and the dynamics of intensity.

Institutional work practice	Effects of institutional work	Changes in effortfulness
Disruption work: **-by disconnecting sanctions and rewards systems** (MBO)	Disrupting demands of a new reward system by disconnecting sanctions and rewards of MBO as a solution to the headquarters' demands for integrating contradictory elements of individual performance and collectivism that are perceived to be too disruptive to cooperation.	Low effortfulness, as it is readily accepted at first. The Korean logic of long working hours combined with the American logic of individual competitiveness made the employees feel responsible to the company. Yet, the way particular elements of contradictory logics were combined demanded subsequent harder work to manage the contradictions.
Creation work: **-by changing normative associations of logics underpinning individualist practices**	Linking MBO to communal structures of the Korean logic.	
-by work on identity (re)construction and theorizing	Creating the 'company as harmonious family' as an organizational institution through managers' combining of Korean and American logics – employees must simultaneously embrace contradictory yet complementary elements.	In contrast to the common-good argument for a sustainable balance, the local management introduces a Korean-style interpretation of the logic of an American-style system in a way that is self-serving and creates tensions.
Maintenance work: **-by enabling work through an officializing strategy**	Supporting the institution by creating personal rules and making them official. Thus, the employees' work towards creating individual good MBO results is linked to the benefits to the whole branch as a harmonic family.	There is an increase in work intensity due to unstable combination of logics serving the managers.
-by routinizing and embedding: Ongoing socialization (social gatherings and events)	Simultaneously boosting collective efforts for individual benefits and MBO productivity by strengthening Korean logic and ensuring attachment to the company by infusing normative foundations into everyday practices of members through drinking parties, company days weddings, etc.	Extra efforts are demanded in strengthening employees' cooperation for good results and attachment to the branch through making social gatherings mandatory. Employees initiate work to bring contradictions to the surface as they gradually are pressured to work harder.
-by valorizing: legitimating the way of combining elements of contradictory logics	Demonstrating the common good of sustaining the new logic, e.g. by using employees who show high spirit in supporting the harmonious family as role models.	Demand for continuously legitimating actions by using officialized norms for the creation of a common-good system. Managers actively use the family metaphor to create a collective responsibility for individual MBO and to boost productivity.

Table 4. (Continued)

Institutional work practice	Effects of institutional work	Changes in effortfulness
-by policing work (threats of social and economic sanctions)	Strengthening the MBO-based individual evaluations in the branch as a common project underpinned by communal logic by ensuring adherence and compliance to this through threats of social or economic sanctions.	Managers increase the amount of effort expended on maintaining contradictions as employees work to reveal contradictions as self-serving.
Creation of new contradictions as unintended consequences of previous maintenance work	Making employees work hard to create good MBO results, which first and foremost benefit the managers' own promotions rather than the branch as a harmonious family.	Tensions are building. Harder, ongoing maintenance work is required to overcome the critique of the officializing strategy and creation of new contradictions. This requires still more continuous social gatherings where employees' dissatisfaction is openly raised. There is continuous amplification of the demand for socialization and policing of work to the extent that more 'after-work' social gatherings inadvertently become extra work.
Maintenance by **demonizing and concealing work:** Managers' critique of contradictory institutional field	Attempts to maintain power of beliefs by returning to the rhetoric of the 'original' contradictory American and Korean logics as an explanation for the bad atmosphere in the branch. Legitimating and concealing institutional dirty work by evaluating the moral statuses of field actors and blaming them for negative developments (IMF, the state).	

Discussion

This article set out to eliminate a void in scholarly knowledge about how dynamics of institutional work, in addition to the work itself, are involved in the everyday practice of managing and sustaining unstable contradictory institutional features of organizations exposed to novel complexity. The research advances theory on the work of managing institutional complexity within organizational bounds by suggesting an alternative ontology for theorizing and researching institutions in the process of ongoing becoming. The article thus speaks to recent calls for research that uncovers how a singular organization integrates and works internally with institutional complexity beyond traditional strategies of decoupling (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011; Pache & Santos, 2013b; Smets, Jarzabkowski et al., 2012; Smets, Morris et al., 2012).

The reported study shows how macro-institutional changes become immersed in organizational practice and how, in turn, the ongoing enactment in practice of a new institutional logic provides the foundation for both institutional continuity and change. Hence, while the changes were structured by particular institutional oppositions of the heterogeneous field, compelling organizational changes (Kraatz & Block, 2008), the forms of logics that emerged and gained a degree of legitimacy and coherence in the organization could not easily be predicted from these (Hallett, 2010; Powell & Colyvas, 2008). Rather, the organizational institution was the momentary effect of particularities unveiled in interrelated work processes of regulating and breaking

different institutional logics among multiple actors in their struggles over symbolic recognition and economic reward. Over time, a distinctive Korean-American form may emerge from the contradictory institutional logics, based on previous social interactions and controversies between organizational actors (e.g. the fact that a manager had milked the area for money, the fact that the branch had previously been number one, fights over the nature of logics in terms of hierarchical relations vs. egalitarian relations, and fights over whether employees should honour their bosses with large gifts). The institution is in a perpetual state of becoming because situated actions within it are inherently creative (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

The more fine-grained view on institutions in the process of continuous becoming has allowed us to carve out two important overall contributions in this study that would otherwise have been missed if, for instance, institutions were reified and perceived as stable, which is a potential effect of taking a much higher level of analysis. We uncover a new form of work in terms of managers ceaselessly managing and recreating institutional contradictions on a day-to-day basis to gain advantages for themselves, contrary to the stated goal of benefitting both the organization and the employees. This is distinct from traditional conceptions of institutional work, in which agency tends to occur only during the exceptional creation or destruction of a relatively stable structure. By concentrating attention on the accompanying dynamics of shifting work efforts in addition to the work practices themselves, we provide a novel way of accounting for whether work intensity is amplifying or diminishing and is likely to result in greater stability or volatility in an institution that is – on the surface – otherwise seemingly stable. In the case studied, the work of managing contradictions was becoming harder and unsustainable. This is an important theoretical addition, since institutional work is not defined solely by its purpose but also by the emergence of effort (Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009). The lion's share of academic attention, however, has hitherto been granted to the former. The reported research offers, in this vein, a new means for understanding the institutional work that occurs when logics are suddenly shifting, organizational institutions are faltering and institutional action must be swift. In the following, we draw out in more detail these contributions to understanding of institutional work as situated in the everyday practice of managing institutional contradictions.

First, a line of research accounts for the relation between institutional work and institutional contradictions (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2009). Seo and Creed (2002) suggest that the experience of contradictions can lead to collective awareness that enables actors to shift from passive institutional reproduction to active change agency. The reported research complements and provides novel insight into the argument of Seo and Creed (2002) by demonstrating that a balance between particular elements of the contradictions may be an institution's potentially unstable foundation and may be something that some institutional inhabitants want to maintain. The managers continuously work toward stabilizing the harmonious-family form of contradictory yet complementary logics, but they never reach a stable state in which they can fall back on taken-for-granted reproduction. Previous research would argue that employees, once conscious of contradictions, may engage in the praxis of changing the present order (Battilana et al., 2009; Seo & Creed, 2002). This study demonstrates, however, that praxis is much more complicated: it may also generate a counter-response of increased effort by those seeking to prolong the persistence of contradictions. Hence, the Suwon managers continuously scaled up the amount of institutional effort expended to downplay cracks and maintain and 'repair' the unstable contradictory forms of logics in order to prevent further disruption and change (Micelotta & Washington, 2013; Sminia, 2011). This effort was mobilized through confrontation with employees who contested and disrupted the balance of logics as being for the common good while bringing to the surface self-serving contradictory relationships between logic elements on which the family form of logics was grounded. Employees gradually developed awareness (Lawrence et al., 2013) of these contradictions and explicitly raised

their growing discontentment with the arrangement; female employees accused managers of not taking care of new team members, and fights occurred at parties. The employees contested the arrangement outside restaurants, in the bathroom and during daily work, and temporary workers quit their jobs. A pressure against the institution comes from within as it binds together unsteady contradictory logics. The process history of managing coexisting logics by multiple actors shapes the shifts needed for subsequent work efforts. In showing that praxis of changing institutions is likely to stimulate a series of counter-responses of shifting levels of effort on the part of those actors seeking to maintain the contradictions, we provide a more dynamic understanding of how endogenous institutional change takes place (Suddaby & Viale, 2011).

Furthermore, recent practice theoretic studies have explained the everyday efforts involved in accomplishing the appearance of stability as being caused by breakdowns inherent to practice, i.e. the general performative nature of practice that poses threats to institutionalized practices (Dacin et al., 2010; Feldman, 2003; Lok & de Rond, 2013). Thus focusing on the processual dynamics of institutional work, Lok and de Rond (2013) account for the shifting efforts required to maintain the traditional and relatively homogeneous institution at the Cambridge University Boat Club in face of practice breakdowns. Taking up their call for more research, the present study of a very mundane and fragile institution provides a theoretical addition by accounting for how the demand for maintenance work dynamically evolves from not only the general performativity of practice but tensions in the particular institutional-structural configuration itself and how those tensions are managed, and thus ultimately to the specific constitution of the national institutional field. Hence, the specific institutional configuration that reflects the cleavages in the national field colours what can be observed in terms of the character and dynamics of efforts in everyday practice performances. In this vein, the variable field-level institutional conditions do indeed have important implications for the character and dynamic of maintenance efforts exerted in the course of everyday practice within an organization. How the form and dynamics of work in the 'internal life of process' (Brown & Duguid, 2000) is relative, without being reducible, to broader structural-institutional conditions of a field deserves more attention.

Second, a growing volume of studies account for persistent institutional complexity in fields and for the higher-level response strategies and structures that organizations mobilize to strike a sustainable balance between multiple logics, such as hiring and socialization policies that frame how organization members enact logics (Battilana & Dorado, 2011; Binder, 2007; Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Pache & Santos, 2010). Previous research, for instance, suggests structural compartmentalization of divisions and actors working within different logics (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009) or construction of strong hybrid organizational identities (Battilana & Dorado, 2011) as mechanisms for organizations to manage institutional complexity (Smets, Jarzabkowski et al., 2012). At the organizational field level of analysis, Reay and Hinings (2009) examine a situation in which conflicting institutional logics have existed over a period of time and reveal four linking mechanisms for managing the rivalry of competing logics that facilitated the separate identities and logics to be maintained in coexistence while developing collaborative relationships in the field.

In contrast to the more structural and policy-based mechanisms of managing institutional complexity that are predominant in extant literature (Besharov & Smith, forthcoming; Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011; Pache & Santos, 2010), the findings of this research further understanding of an under-researched means of managing contradictory institutional logics by balancing them in the course of everyday practical work in ways that maintain elements of both logics (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Smets, Jarzabkowski et al., 2012). We demonstrate how institutional logics are characterized by a high degree of plasticity (Lok & de Rond, 2013) in practice, which allows multiple actors to work continuously on particular fragments of

logics and the degree of contradiction and complementarity between them. The relations between logics thus undergo a series of work cycles of continuously (re)producing logics as completely oppositional, contradictory yet complementary, contradictorily unbalanced, and oppositional. The Suwon managers exploited the ambiguity of the contradictory demands by legitimizing the coexisting institutional logics, otherwise construed as complete opposites, into a new form of logics, 'the company as family'. The managers attempted to manage the institutional logics in a 'both/and' approach (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2009) by working on maintaining logics in contradictory yet complementary positions. Switching, mutual adjustment, situated improvising and expanded practice repertoire have been subjected to some research scrutiny as forms of practical orientations for managing complexity (see e.g. Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Managers mobilized ongoing bridging interactions (Smets, Jarzabkowski et al., 2012) in the course of everyday work as a way to exploit complementarities between contradictory logics by performing logics to support each other and build bridges between established and upcoming institutions. This occurred not merely as a non-political form of coping or sense-making that maintained the status quo but rather through the managers' strategic 'use' and ongoing bringing together of contradictory logics, which was aimed to make employees work harder and to acquire different forms of symbolic and economic capital (e.g. promotion, large gifts, business trips, tenure) (Currie, Lockett, Finn, Martin, & Waring, 2012). They did little to balance bridging activities with any work of 'demarcating' logics to counteract unsustainable logic combinations (Smets, Jarzabkowski et al., 2012), but over time they constructed unbalanced contradictory logic relations from the difficult maintenance work of trying to make novel complexity routine. In this vein, the study demonstrates how work to balance unstable contradictions is far from accomplished with the formal use of organizational systems and strategies, since the balance in the form of logics is put at risk in all – and even the most seemingly mundane – social interactions in which multiple forms of institutional work are dynamically combined as ways to manage contradictions. This is, for instance, demonstrated by constant challenges to the harmony of the family arising from employees' work of surfacing contradictory logic relationships that were self-serving for the managers and exposing emergent cracks in the family form of logics. Rather than being given per se, the significance and effects of particular means or 'mechanisms' of managing institutional complexity are thus, from a theory-of-practice perspective, highly dependent on how they are put into use in the messy and actual unfolding practice of doing institutional work amid multiple other actors' work strategies. This calls for research on the means of managing institutional complexity as enacted in the ongoing flow of organizational activities. More can still be done to elucidate how organizational-structural mechanisms and everyday work interact in managing complexity.

Managers would initiate new cycles of work of strategically manoeuvring and 'switching' between logics while construing them as complete opposites and blaming these opposing styles for the negative developments experienced. This was done in response to employees' growing perceptions that managers merely officialized dirty work as being for the common good. The research thus contributes to understanding of how organizations refract institutional complexity (Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014) by showing how, rather than merely being orchestrated from the top, the emergence and relative coherence of institutional 'form' is an ongoing accomplishment of the everyday micro-practices of actors at all levels (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

Concluding Remarks

This study advances understanding of the work of managing unstable institutional contradictions by demonstrating how organizational changes occur as a result of social dialectics between local institutional work strategies and global changes (Marquis & Battilana, 2009). Yet it also

has different limitations stemming from the nature of the ethnographic research strategy applied, suggesting lines of inquiry that future studies may profitably explore. The reported findings are based on a single fieldwork project with a limited number of informants from one branch of one organization. Organizational actors' work of managing contradictory logics may depend on the balance of power among differently positioned actors (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2009). In the present study, a branch was selected with already successful, award-winning managers. Managers in another branch might not be able to momentarily maintain an organizational institution that binds contradictory logics together in such a self-serving manner. Over time, however, imbalances emerged between the logics. The institutional work was on the verge of becoming too hard to bear in this collapsing, award-winning branch that today no longer exists. While research in organization studies lately has cast increasing light upon the upsides of constructing organizations as institutional hybrids, the present research has presented a view of the backside of the coin, where mischief seems to have been afoot.

Finally, we direct scholarly attention to some broader implications derived from according theoretical priority to becoming over being in researching institutions. Approaching institutions from a social ontology of becoming invites researchers to explore theoretical issues that differ markedly from modes of inquiry that theorize stability as the more natural state of institutions. Traditionally, institutional change has been explained in terms of stasis defining institutions' normal states, rather than on its own terms, with stability as an exception. From the perspective of becoming, the question of how change is realized despite strong forces towards stasis is rephrased in questions of how institutions can stay 'the same' over time despite constant entropic tendencies. Basically, there is little difference in the understanding of whether an institution from one moment to the next will be defined as equal to or different from the moment before, because both processes can be characterized by an ontology of 'becoming' – an ongoing social (re)construction of an institution as either 'the same' or different. An illustrative line of researching institutions, as this study suggests, could illuminate the ways in which the work of institutional becoming comes to constitute being (Nayak & Chia, 2011; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). A becoming lens offers a strategy for understanding institutions where the work of maintaining and changing is conceived as an ongoing, socially dynamic accomplishment that does not generate reified states of stability or change. From this perspective, work will be demanded by actors in the perpetuation of all institutions, even those appearing most routinized or stable on the surface, but this does not imply that the character and dynamics of work effort will necessarily be the same for different institutions (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013), within variegated fields or for the same institution over time.

In addition to providing an alternative to the traditional stability/change dichotomy, another important dimension along which theorizing institutions as becoming may lead to a different set of research questions than more traditional institutional ways of understanding organizations pertains to the increased criticality granted to mundane, locally situated and highly distributed forms of agency. Framing institutions within an ontology of becoming thus entails an analytical and methodological turn to ongoing micro-events, actions and interactions as the critical site of becoming, where institutions are substantively put at risk (Kapferer, 2010; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). In this lens, the little, mundane work of those at the margins or lower levels of organizations, the organizational 'coalface' (Barley, 2008), will likely be no less of an effort or significance than the more traditional institutional workers confronted by institutional studies. Research that restricts itself to shorter time spans, smaller samples and lower levels of analysis, increasing sensitivity to the situated circumstances and particularities of work within organizations, may thus benefit studies of institutions grounded in an ontology of becoming.

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