Challenging Community: Logic or Context?

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Abstract
In their 2012 book *The Institutional Logics Perspective*, Patricia Thornton, William Ocasio and Michael Lounsbury proposed the addition of community as a logic to more traditional candidates such as religion and family. This article argues that an examination of the wider sociological and historical literature indicates that community is indeed an important category of analysis, but as the context shaping action rather than as a logic. The literature that Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury draw on tends to conflate community as a form of informal social structure with community as geographically bounded space. Using Friedland’s characterization of logics as a combination of substance and practices, I argue that community lacks the coherence necessary to function as a logic. While community remains an important part of our conceptual armoury, I argue that as well as being aware of the connotations of the term it may be more productive to consider it as the context in which logics are received, contested and blended. Attention is thus directed to the ways in which a range of organizational forms might foster or negate shared feelings of groupness.

Keywords
civil society, critical realism, culture, human relations and practices, institutional theory, non-profit organizations

‘What do we talk about when we talk about community?’ ask Kibler and Munoz (2020) in their discussion of locally-based enterprises. This article seeks to explore their question, with particular emphasis on the notion, promulgated by Patricia Thornton, William Ocasio and Michael Lounsbury (in their book *The Institutional Logics Perspective*, that community represents a particular...
form of institutional logic. In their book, Thornton and colleagues presented both an overview and an extension of the notion of institutional logics. Their approach is considered in more detail below but a novel feature, and the focus of this article, was the addition of community as a logic to more traditional candidates such as religion and family. While their approach has been both extended and critiqued, it has entered the mainstream, with a number of articles presenting their list of logics, including community, as having agreed status (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Gümüşay, Smets, & Morris, 2020; Lounsbury & Wang, 2019; York, Vedula, & Lenox, 2018). There are a number of problems with their formulation. At the societal level the inclusion of community as a logic is problematic when contrasted with other candidate logics, as I explicate in more detail below. This matters because our views on the constitution of society shape what we look for in our concrete analyses of organizational life (Archer, 2013, p. 9). Our concepts direct our attention to some features and have the potential to blind us to others. As we will see, it is arguable that community acts more as a mediator of societal logics than as a societal logic in its own right. Considering the ways in which community is more usefully seen as a contingent outcome of a variety of social arrangements directs our attention to the importance that organizations have in either sustaining or negating feelings of shared groupness.

‘Community’ is a term that is in widespread use in everyday discourse. Journalists express concern about the impact of social media on community cohesion. Political appeals are made to varieties of community. Community is appealed to against the impersonal forces of globalization and managerial capitalism (Hertel, Bacq, & Belz, 2019). In the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 there was widespread use of the term. In the United Kingdom, for example, deaths from the virus were for some time reported as occurring ‘in hospitals, in care homes and in the community’. Community here was a remainder term, covering all settings outside the health and social care system. It evoked domestic settings but also included places such as prisons. A more positive spin was put on the (re)emergence of ‘community spirit’, where streets and neighbourhoods became animated by practices such as support for the vulnerable and the weekly ‘clap for carers’. In 1976 the cultural historian Raymond Williams published his *Keywords*.

This book took a number of widely used terms of cultural and social analysis in order to trace their origins and development. One of the terms he examined was community and he had this to say of its use to denote a form of social organization opposed to more formal bodies such as ‘state’ or ‘society’ (or indeed ‘business’):

> Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term. (Williams, 2011, p. 66)

His observation is the starting point for an examination of the use of the term ‘community’.

Let me make that concrete by drawing on a striking ‘insider’ account. Joseph Smith, born in 1903, was the son of a Lincolnshire farm worker who himself became a farm worker when he left elementary education at the age of twelve (Smith, 1993). Thanks to a trade union scholarship he was able to attend university and build a new career as a lecturer in agricultural economics. While he grew up on isolated farms, in 1921 he moved with his family to a village. He was therefore in a position to give an insider account of life in what are often seen as ‘classic’ communities, the rural villages of early twentieth-century Britain. However, while he found neighbourliness, he found no evidence of a village community. As he observed:

> Religious, welfare and sports organisation, instead of bringing people together and having a cohesive influence on village communities had, to a large extent, done the opposite. Church and chapel communities were too small, too wrapped up in their own ethos, to be able or willing to provide
the leadership necessary to make villages something more than collections of families. Some would blame class divisions, the absence, within the different status groups, of any desire to become involved in activities outside their own group. (Smith, 1993, p. 112)

While he notes that inhabitants were ‘good neighbours’ this was ‘only within their own groups’ (Smith, 1993, p. 112). These observations suggest the limits of the community and the dangers of extrapolating from phenomena such as neighbourliness. As Williams (2011) suggests, the entirely positive connotations of the term community can blind us to the very real divisions that might exist despite external appearances. Smith’s account also suggests some of the aspects that might make a community, such as shared practices and organizations, together with local leadership.

I next consider the development of the institutional logics approach, both in the formulations put forward by Thornton and colleagues and in the direction it has been taken by Friedland. His approach, I suggest, gives us a more useful lens on community.

**Theoretical Context: Logics and Institutional Orders**

The initial formulation of institutional logics was first propounded in a 1991 essay by Friedland and Alford. Entitled ‘Bringing Society Back In’, their argument was that society should be seen as consisting of a set of institutional orders, each with a distinctive logic. Logics are combinations of symbolic constructions and material practices that give meaning to the ways in which people engage in their social and organizational life. They are few in number, operate at the societal level, and are enduring in character. To illustrate their argument they suggested that ‘The central institutions of the contemporary capitalist West – capitalist market, bureaucratic state, democracy, nuclear family, and Christian religion – shape individual preferences and organizational interests as well as the repertoire of behaviors by which they may attain them’ (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 232). It is important to note that they do not provide any criteria for deriving institutions and their associated logics, but they are clear that such logics are located in specific conjunctures of time and space. As they note, ‘These institutional logics are symbolically grounded, organizationally structured, politically defended, and technically and materially constrained, and hence have specific historical limits’ (Friedland & Alford, 1991, pp. 248–9). While logics are relatively enduring, the motor for change is contradiction, not only between institutions but also within them.

The idea of logics was taken up within organizational analysis by Patricia Thornton and William Ocasio (1999) in their study of academic publishing in the United States. Developing the ideas at greater length and drawing on institutional theory’s focus on legitimacy, Thornton suggested that organizational forms (which are not considered by Friedland and Alford) ‘are legitimate and competitive to the extent that they are in conformity with higher-order institutional logics’ (Thornton, 2004, p. 14). Starting in the 1970s, she argues, there was a shift from what she terms a ‘professional logic’ based on the primacy of editorial judgement to a ‘market logic’ in which decisions were based on considerations of revenue generation and profit. Here, the categories that Friedland and Alford suggest are supplemented by the focus on the professions that emerged from a good deal of work in institutional theory. It is worth noting here that the notion of the editors as anything other than ‘quasi-professional’ is only mentioned in passing and that the status of the market logic is a little unclear, being the logic either of finance capital or of marketing. In other words, there are complexities in the translation and adaptation of Friedland and Alford’s illustrative categories into categories that later appear to be taken for granted. However, the argument is made that the contending logics can be traced through changes in organizational positions and their associated practices.

In 2012 Thornton and colleagues proposed a detailed exposition of a model of an interinstitutional system. It is worth noting that this rests heavily at many points on Thornton’s work on
publishing. For example, they note Thornton’s modelling of an interinstitutional system ‘based in a reading of Weber ([1922], 1978) and organization theory’ (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 66). Yet we turn to that work only to find the comment that ‘The historical comparative method of formal typologies stems from Weber’s analysis of authority structures or systems of legitimate social control in organizations – for example, his categories of traditional, charismatic, and legal authority’ (Thornton, 2004, p. 24). Given this rather thin basis for the development of ideal types it is perhaps not surprising that one of the authors subsequently argued that ‘In contrast to the ideal-typical approach, we propose that societal logics are historically constituted cultural structures generated through collective memory making’ (Ocasio, Mauskapf, & Steele, 2016, 677). Be that as it may, in the 2012 book, Thornton et al. proposed an interinstitutional system made up of seven distinctive institutional orders: family, community, religion, state, market, profession and corporation. These orders were derived from a critique of Friedland and Alford based on work in the new institutionalist tradition. So

The influences of several institutional sectors are absent in Friedland and Alford’s (1991) representation of the interinstitutional system. The influences of the professions, which both Meyer and Rowan . . . and DiMaggio and Powell . . . so clearly laid out, are mysteriously absent. Also absent is the institutional order of the corporation as exemplified in Fligstein’s seminal . . . research. (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 66)

These orders constituted what they termed the X-axis of their interinstitutional system; on the Y-axis they derived a number of categories, such as the sources of legitimacy and identity, and the basis of norms. That is, the horizontal axis of their examples contains their seven suggested institutional logics that comprise their interinstitutional system. For each of these logics they provide a number of distinguishing features. A clear innovation was the argument that one of their orders was community. Before considering the detailed derivation of their usage, it is valuable to outline where Friedland has taken his own understanding of institutional logics, for it is an understanding that challenges the notion of community as a societal logic. I will then use the law as an example of an institutional order as a way of sharpening up the contrast with community.

Friedland has increasingly pushed his conception of institutional logics in a ‘religious’ direction. The emphasis is on passionate attachment and belief as the motors of institutional belonging, where actions are taken ‘for the sake of’ rather than ‘in order to’ (Friedland, 2018b). The attachment is to substances which ‘cannot be directly observed, but are immanent in the practices that organize an institutional field, values never exhausted by those practices, practices premised on faith’ (Friedland, 2009, p. 61). I do not seek in this article to engage with the ways in which this perspective has been developed through engagement with the practice theory of Theodore Schatzki and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger (Friedland, 2018b) but rather to use the formulation to interrogate the resources of history in formulating candidates for the status of institutional logics (Mutch, 2018, 2019). I see such logics, in common with widespread practice in social theory (e.g. Archer, 1995), as existing at the societal level. This is in contrast to the more diffuse use of the term in much new institutionalist thought where, for example, Ocasio, Thornton and Lounsbury, in a reflection and review of their conceptualization, argue that ‘institutional logics are the organizing principles of institutions, where institutions can be identified at various level of analysis, including, but not limited to, the institutional orders of society’ (Ocasio, Thornton, & Lounsbury, 2017, p. 511). Here I agree that logics are the ‘laws of motion’ of institutions but reserve the term institution for the societal level. I draw a distinction here between institutions and the process of institutionalization. I take the latter to be the process of practices becoming taken for granted and infused with value. This can happen at a number of levels but we need different terms for such outcomes, as I discuss below. I take the
term ‘institutional order’ to refer to the accretion and sedimentation of practices, positions and organizations which occur over time and reinforce logics by making them the concrete circumstances in which actors find themselves involuntarily located and which shape and condition their actions.

As I note, while institutions are societal phenomena, their practical impact is felt at a number of levels, one of which might be the locality (or community in some discourses). While not part of Friedland’s approach, I take fields and organizations to be valuable tools to think about such practical impacts. There are two further considerations. One is that the pursuit of the substance does not give rise to a homogeneous logic but rather to potential contradictions. There are different ways of expressing attachment to the same substance. The second is that while we may be able to formulate institutions at an abstract level, their concrete instantiation happens in particular conjunctions of time and place. In particular, institutional orders are laid down over time and their impact can be enduring. It is because of this that the political scientist Paul Pierson (2004, p. 133) prefers to speak of institutional development rather than institutional change. If we accept that institutions are societal phenomena then it becomes much more possible to change practices than institutions, as study of one institutional order, the law, seems to suggest.

I explore the law in a little more detail in order both to put some flesh on the discussion above and to contrast it with the status of community as logic. For Friedland (2018b, p. 1393), ‘The worldhood of the world is composed of a configuration of institutional logics’. One of the combinations of substance and practices he adduces to this argument is ‘justice through juridical practices that classify actions according to the binary of legal and illegal’ (Friedland, 2018b, p. 1393). Accordingly, it seems useful to consider the law, which Thornton et al. do not discuss but which other sources seem to provide evidence for being a key institutional order. My sources here are twofold, one older and drawn from history, the other more recent and taken from the organizational literature. Both refute the notion that the law is simply a pale reflection of other institutional orders, notably those of politics or the economy. The first source is the eminent British Marxist historian E. P. Thompson, who caused a degree of controversy among his Marxist peers by arguing that, as well as the law reflecting the concerns of the ruling elite,

The law may also be seen as ideology, or as particular rules and sanctions which stand in a definite and active relationship (often a field of conflict) to social norms; and, finally, it may be seen simply in terms of its own logic, rules and procedures – that is, simply as law. And it is not possible to conceive of any complex society without law. (Thompson, 1977, p. 260)

His particular focus was on the role of the juror, where he argued that ‘Men [sic] will, on occasion, act not according to their own interests but according to the expectations and values attached to their role. The role of juror carries (and still carries) such an inheritance of expectations’ (Thompson, 1977, p. 189). Here we have a logic that creates particular positions and associated expectations, a logic that might come into conflict with other logics. That is the case in the more recent example, as Lena Pellandini-Simányi and Zsuzsanna Vargha (2019) show in their examination of the fate of attempts in Hungary to change laws relating to mortgage finance. Such laws came up against the actions of legal technicians who saw their job as connecting legislation to the existing web of legal rules. The main outcome, the authors argued, was to indicate that

the properties of ‘law itself’, which cannot be reduced to political interests or economic principles, structure the possibilities for legal-economic arrangements and thereby influence the kind of organizational field that will emerge. Ideas about market design, such as mortgage banking, needed to be translated into laws that match the existing legal formats of economic transactions or can be connected to them in legally compatible ways. (Pellandini-Simányi & Vargha, 2019, p. 15)

Once again, the argument is that the law has laws of motion that are internal to it as an institutional order, an order that spawns a whole
panoply of organizations (courts, prisons, law firms), positions (judges, warders, lawyers) and associated practices (evidential rules, reasoning styles, time recording). Such orders, however, are both internally divided and arranged differently in particular conjunctures of time and place. The internal divisions are manifest in specialisms such as corporate law (Morgan & Quack, 2005). More important are differences in legal systems. Because of the nature of Western imperialism the two systems that are most frequently contrasted and which have the greatest global reach are the common law traditions characteristic of the Anglo-American approach and the civil law tradition associated with mainland Europe (Muzio & Faulconbridge, 2013). Both spawn distinctive practices of reasoning that give different content to positions and practices, such as courts and judges, that attract the same labels. In a careful examination of evolving legal practices in Anglo-German law firms, Smets, Morris and Greenwood (2012) draw attention to differences in the drawing up of contracts. Contracts drawn up by German lawyers were sparse in form, resting on the specification of standard terms in legal codes. By contrast, English lawyers produced dense contracts with many clauses. What these conflicts initially led to was mutual incomprehension, but emergent from this over time were hybrid practices of contract formulation that sought to blend the two versions of legal logic. Whether such changes in organizational practice led to subsequent change in the respective legal systems was not the concern of their article but one would suggest that the fundamental principles of each legal system remained untouched. This reminds us to be careful to distinguish between practice and institutional change, the latter happening in much slower and more incremental fashion (Mutch, 2018, p. 2).

If one accepts that, with all the qualifications noted above (and recognizing that of necessity this is a very brief outline) that the law can be seen as a distinctive institutional order with its own logic, one that can in turn come into relations of complementarity or contradiction with other institutional orders (Archer, 1996), then community as logic seems not to share these features. These contrasts are a useful context to a more detailed exploration of the derivation of community as logic that Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury essay.

**Questioning Community as Logic**

In introducing the logic of community as an institutional order TOL note that

Thornton’s (2004) typology did much to make Friedland and Alford’s (1991) initial theoretical formulation of the interinstitutional system amenable to theory construction and empirical research. However, we suggest it overlooked an important institutional order – the community. In this section, we make use of the research on community to evaluate the relevance of the concept of community as an institutional order on the X-axis. (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 68)

Later, they point out that

we extend the ideas gleaned from the reviews of largely qualitative community studies to suggest a more formalized comparative approach to theorizing and measuring the effects of community. That is, to conceptualize the effects of community in line with the institutional logics perspective. (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 71)

Further,

We have derived the ideal types on the vertical Y-axis, that is the categorical elements such as sources of legitimacy, authority, and identity and the bases of norms, attention and strategy from an interpretation of the research on community across the broad sweep of literature previously discussed. (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 72)

It is therefore useful to turn to that literature.

A key source here was an article by Steven Brint (2001) in the journal Sociological Theory. In that article Brint bemoans the failure of the largely qualitative tradition of community studies to produce generalizable hypotheses as opposed to rich descriptive accounts. Drawing
on their roots in social anthropology, they remained rooted, he argued, in a conceptualization of communities as geographically bounded and locally focused. As such, their prime contribution was to undermine any notion of such collectivities as embodying ‘warm and mutually supportive community relations’ (Brint, 2001, p. 5). However, he argued, the community studies tradition failed to give analytical purchase on the varieties of informal social organization that might exist. Drawing on Durkheim he suggested the need to examine such informal collectivities along both structural and cultural dimensions. He argued that these dimensions were

(1) dense and demanding social ties, (2) social attachments to and involvements in institutions, (3) ritual occasions, and (4) small group size. The cultural variables are as follows: (5) perceptions of similarity with the physical characteristics, expressive style, way of life, or historical experience of others; and (6) common beliefs in an idea system, a moral order, an institution, or a group. (Brint, 2001, p. 3)

From these variables he argued that it was possible to derive a typology of communities. Initially the split was by whether social groups were organized by geographical proximity or choice. Based on this initial level he suggested, using the variables outlined above, that it was possible to construct a four-level typology that resulted in eight major subtypes. These he characterized as ‘(1) communities of place, (2) communes and collectives, (3) localized friendship networks, (4) dispersed friendship networks, (5) activity-based elective communities, (6) belief-based elective communities, (7) imagined communities, and (8) virtual communities’ (Brint, 2001, p. 11).

It was from this discussion that Thornton and colleagues adopted Brint’s definition of communities ‘as aggregates of people who share common activities and/or beliefs and who are bound together principally by relations of affect, loyalty, common values, and/or personal concern (i.e., interest in the personalities and life events of one another)’ (Brint, 2001, p. 8). Such a definition broadens the concept of community, they argue, to include newer forms of informal social interaction, especially those facilitated by new forms of technology. They further gloss Brint’s definition to note ‘there is no mention of spatial, territorial, or geographic boundaries which opens up the scope of inquiry to contemporary types of community’ (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 69). Although that is correct with regard to the formal definition, it is not strictly true of Brint’s broader typology, which clearly as item one in the list above includes ‘communities of place’. If we examine the sources that Thornton and colleagues use then we can see both a continuing emphasis on place and a divergence between this more traditional view of community and a view that emphasizes the wider forms envisaged by Brint.

In their discussion of the factors influencing social action by corporations, Christopher Marquis, Mary Ann Glyn and Gerald Davis (2007) are explicit that they are using ‘community’ as a synonym for ‘local context’. They state that ‘local geographic environments – that is, communities – are especially important influences on corporate social action’ (Marquis et al., 2007, p. 927). This is not the tight-knit locality of traditional rural community studies, however. Here the unit of analysis is the metropolitan statistical area in which corporations are headquartered. Based on this, they argue that involvement in and the type of social action supported varies in patterned ways based on local traditions. The importance of the local context is reinforced in a literature review carried out by Marquis and Battilana (2009), again a source heavily relied on by Thornton et al.. In arguing for the need to examine local influences on social action as contrasted to the rather disembedded focus in much new institutional analysis on the field, Marquis and Battilana emphasize ‘bounded geographic entities’. As they state:

We regard the community level of analysis as a local level of analysis corresponding to the populations, organizations and markets located in a geographic territory and sharing, as a result of their common location, elements of local culture, norms and identity. (Marquis & Battilana, 2009, p. 286)
If we turn to another important source, the study of the historical development of banking by Marquis and Lounsbury (2007), we find that again ‘community’ is being used as a synonym for the locally bounded context of action. Here the key feature in the resistance of local banking to the pressures of national banking organizations is the presence and experience of locally based banking professionals. ‘Professionals in a community,’ they conclude, ‘can be an especially important source of support for opposition to larger entities when those entities espouse goals and beliefs that are antithetical to those in the community’ (Marquis & Lounsbury, 2007, p. 814). It is in this article that we see the deployment of the notion of a ‘community logic’ whose key feature is a desire to maintain local autonomy. What we seem to have in all these examples is the importance of the position of particular actors within a geographically bounded context. These are not the tightly interrelated communities of traditional community studies, ones which are prone to the connotations of romantic nostalgia that Williams (2011) warns us about. However, such connotations are not recognized in these accounts.

By contrast, while Thornton and colleagues arguably downplay the continued importance of geographically defined place in drawing on these sources to advocate a community logic, they do stress the emergence of new forms of community. Drawing on O’Mahony and Lakhani (2011) they suggest that ‘contemporary communities coalesce around any number of identity sources, ranging from academic communities . . . to occupational . . . and communities of practice, . . . to technical . . ., online, . . . and open-source communities’ (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 71). These, they suggest, are communities of choice that escape the constraints of place, enabled in particular by new forms of technology. As we have noted above, Brint’s typology envisages several variants of such informal forms of social organization. Indeed, it is his conclusion that

It is in these more loosely connected and activity-based groups that the best hopes exist for bringing some of the virtues of community to the modern world, while at the same time avoiding its characteristic vices and its purely mythical connotations. (Brint, 2001, p. 20)

However, it is worth noting that Brint explicitly excludes one of the most important variants of the use of community, that connected with the world of work and organizational learning encapsulated in the notion of ‘communities of practice’. As he notes

Both work-related group and voluntary interest organizations may feature many of the qualities associated with communities – friendly relations, small size, well-travelled meeting places, many ritual occasions – but they are not communities in the technical sense in which I will use the term, because the orientation of at least the leading members is ultimately tied up with issues of rational interest. In particular, work performance criteria and the monitoring of work activity by supervisors limit the extent to which work groups can be characterized as communities. (Brint, 2001, p. 9)

What the example of communities of practice suggests is the wide nature of the social formations that are covered by the term community and, by association, casts doubt on the existence of a distinctive community logic. Some of the challenges can be seen by returning to one of the elements on Thornton et al.’s X-axis. Against ‘Informal control mechanisms’ for community they note ‘visibility of actions’ (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 73). Such mechanisms are redolent of the notion of community as involving face-to-face interactions in a bounded location with strong cultural norms. As Brint points out, action is less likely to be visible in more dispersed forms of community. As he notes,

The use of informal means for the adjustment of interests and the settlement of disputes is, therefore, most common in communities of place and in elective communities. These means are supplemented by formal rules or adjudication by formal authorities in communes and collectives (where interaction is restricted) and in virtual communities (where personal familiarity is low). (Brint, 2001, p. 16)
What this suggests is that it is difficult to isolate a distinctive and unique community logic. On the basis of the sources cited by Thornton et al. themselves it is clear that there are a wide range of uses of the concept of community. In much of the institutional literature its use appears to be a synonym for local context, relatively unaware of the broader connotations. When it is used as an indication of an informal social formation this can span close-knit face-to-face groups where time is important in building shared identity to widely dispersed groups which bear more of the characteristics of loosely affiliated networks. Often, it would appear, use is because the term is ‘to-hand’.

**Logics as Substance and Practice**

It is worth noting that work that has built on the exploration of community provided by Thornton and colleagues appears to go in two directions, one, I suggest, more productive than the other. When Juan Almandoz (2012, p. 1382) explores the impact of community and financial logics on new banking ventures, he articulates the view of community as consisting of ‘strong, affective, and enduring ties among members of small and bounded groups’. That view is carried further into his review with Christopher Marquis and Michael Cheely of geographical and affiliation-based communities (Almandoz, Marquis, & Cheely, 2017). They cast their net wide to haul in a still more diverse range of setting and organizational types that they suggest can be viewed as communities. As they suggest, their definition of communities as ‘a group of people bound together by meaningful relationships from which members can extract cultural and material resources’ is broad enough to include groupings within organizations of the type ruled out by Brint (Almanrazo et al., 2017, p. 192). It also means that a wide range of contexts come under their ambit. For example, worker cooperatives, despite being formal organizations with boundaries defined by law, are included ‘because of the more meaningful relationships involved among members’ (Almandoz et al., 2017, p. 208). This stress on meaningful relations then encompasses social and political movements such as those associated with Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. In a move from the sublime to the ridiculous they then also put forward the claims of Uber, AirBnB and eBay on the basis that ‘The philosophy that underlies these organizations – that people are good and can generally be trusted to deal equitably with one another if the necessary safeguards are in place – could be considered a manifestation of the community logic’ (Almandoz et al., 2017, p. 204). On the contrary, I would suggest that the stretching of the concept that is involved here, just as with the term ‘institution’ (as argued by Alvesson & Spicer, 2019, p. 206), voids it of useful concrete application. The sheer diversity of social groupings to which the term is being attached tends to confirm the difficulties with seeing community as a single logic.

A potentially more productive direction is supplied by Min-Dong Paul Lee and Michael Lounsbury (2015) in their exploration of the differing fortunes of toxic waste control across 43 localities in Texas and Louisiana. Here the focus is on community logics plural, for factors such as the political make-up of local contexts made a significant difference to the reception of regulatory changes. They make the important point that ‘community logics can amplify or dampen the influence of broader field-level logics’ (Lee & Lounsbury, 2015, p. 847). They explicitly locate community logics on their model as a layer below wider institutional logics, filtering and mediating the impact of higher-level changes. Such a formulation can be found in other uses of the term community. In the context of development initiatives in India the power of local norms shaped the introduction of broader logics (Venkatraman, Vermuelen, Raaijmakers, & Mair, 2016). Resistance to state regulatory measures in the Netherlands, argue Simons, Vermeulen and Knoben (2016), was shaped by the characteristics of local municipalities (for which they use communities as a synonym). While such examples are an important corrective to the notion of the existence of a distinctive community logic at societal level, the danger with such approaches is homogenizing the nature of local contexts. On
one level, it seems clear that particular places can generate specific ‘characters’, ones that have emerged from the distinctive histories of the location, but the use of the term ‘community’ tends to obviate the very real differences that lie behind this label. For example, Mary Ann Glyn used the term ‘civic community’ to describe the character of Atlanta: ‘The Atlanta “character of place” was one of growth, opportunism and boosterism, and especially the kind of entrepreneurism which favoured land Owning interests’ (Glynn, 2008, p. 1128). She is clear that this character was a ‘pervasive ethos of the city’s business elites’ (Glynn, 2008, p. 1128). While this is a useful tool in examining the response of such elites to the staging of a major sporting event, what such a focus tends to elide are the very different voices that might be present in the city. She does note that ‘the ideology of Olympism had a better fit with powerful elite’s growth aspirations of the city; those with land-interests eventually won out over inner city development concerns in spite of vocal grass-roots efforts to redirect elite interests’ but this is a passing mention and the other groups in the city are very much a shadowy presence (Glynn, 2008, p. 1130). While that is perhaps understandable in the context of the main thrust of her discussion, it does point to the danger that applying the label of ‘community’, with all the connotations that Williams (2011) draws our attention to, runs the risk of downplaying or obscuring very real differences of class, gender or ethnicity.

Turning back to Friedland’s focus on practices can help cast light on some of these factors.

Friedland argues that, in Thornton et al. (2012), ‘Modal material practices are not specified; neither are institutional objects’ (Friedland, 2012, p. 585). I want to use a historical example to suggest how these factors might help us think about community not as a societal logic but as an emergent effect of shared participation in taken-for-granted practices. Drawing on the notion that play is a central institutional logic (Mutch, 2018) I want to argue that taken-for-granted leisure practices can contribute to distinctive senses of shared collective identity, even when they are not engaged in with any intention other than fulfilling needs inherent to them as social practices (enjoyment, achievement, etc.). The historian of the seventeenth-century English Civil War David Underdown (1987) has used the nature of the games that were played in villages in the south of the country to help in understanding divergences in political affiliation. He finds that in the open downland villages with their collective farming practices the game of choice was a precursor of modern football, a game involving collective endeavour. By contrast, the favoured sport in the wood pasture regions was stoolball, a precursor of the game of cricket, a sport involving more focus on individual prowess within a collective framework. While he is clear that there were other reasons for political affiliations, such as different occupational structures, he is clear that these alone cannot explain the affiliation of the downland villages with the royalist cause against the parliamentarianism of the wood pasture villages. Both were communities organized around shared sporting practices but those practices and so the communities that engaged in them differed in ways that were significant for social action.

While it might seem strange to mobilize games as a key practice in facilitating a form of collective identification that can be characterized as community, I suggest that forms of play in fact form a powerful means of articulating a sense of community. This seems to be borne out in more modern forms of sport, most notably around the impact of football. As Andrei Markovits and Steven Hellerman note of organized sports,

Everywhere, the gradual weakening of working-class culture and the concomitantly lessening of traditional communities centered around the old ball park, the home pitch, the team pub, or the neighborhood bar is associated with a loss of authenticity and a commercialization that any true fan of the respective sport decries. (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001, p. 31)

Of course, the form of community that is often associated with these sports is a class- and gender-specific one. As Markovits and Hellerman (2001, p. 28) note, ‘The main social carrier of
this transformation of sport from activity and games to culture and contest has been the male, industrial working class.' Indeed, historical explorations indicate that in many working-class areas it is women who sustain a parallel notion of community based not on either sport or occupation but on neighbourliness. Such is the import of the exploration by Melanie Tebbut (1995) using oral history of the role of ‘women’s talk’, often characterized as ‘gossip’, in forging community norms. It was young women, Jerry White (1986) argues, who were instrumental in bringing change to ‘Campbell Bunk’, an area often referred to as the ‘worst street in North London’ in the inter-war years. In some locations, notably in the United States, locational separation by ethnicity is a further factor in creating a sense of community.

As in the case of sports stadia, places are also important in creating a sense of local attachment. In the United Kingdom, the football ground looming above rows of terraced houses, as at Anfield in Liverpool, is a powerful symbol of shared attachments. Other buildings can play a similar role. The British historian Steve Hindle (2000, p. 229) points to the symbolic importance of meeting places at local level in creating forms of national identity when he notes of local government meetings in sixteenth-century England that

whereas manor courts did not meet in parish churches (even though they were almost certainly the only buildings large enough for the purpose), vestries almost invariably tended to do so. The simple fact of this relocation rendered the presence of the state all the more tangible in the local community, for if Elizabethan vestries met in parish churches they did so in the presence of the royal arms (the coat of arms which by royal decree was to hang in a prominent place in every church).

The coat of arms thus displayed was an example of what Michael Billig (1995) has termed ‘banal’ nationalism. That is, he argues, what is important to an ongoing sense of national identity ‘is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on

the public building’ (Billig, 1995, p. 8). It is taken-for-granted objects that symbolize a sense of shared identity.

Locating Community

If we accept that the sheer diversity of the uses to which the label community can be attached renders the notion of it as a societal institutional order implausible, then it makes more sense to view it as context, whether that be a network affiliated to a particular objective or a locality with shared features, that filters and mediates broader logics. That is, logics are not experienced at an abstract level but in concrete contexts. We can take Friedland’s injunction to examine modal material practices and objects in the case of one of the institutional logics that both figures as a vehicle for affiliation and as a group of people in a local context to develop the nature of community further. Students of religious affiliation have stressed that while attached to an ultimate faith, such faith is developed and manifested not in abstract theological concepts but in participation in shared practices, notably in rituals. Those rituals might have derived ultimately from theological statements but for the averagely faithful it is from regular participation in the performance of rituals that faith emerges and is consolidated. Ritual is also important in making connections, connections that come from shared performance rather than, necessarily, shared values. So, observes Whitehouse (2004, p. 69), ‘what it means to be a regular churchgoer is not to be part of a particular group but to participate in a ritual scheme and belief structure that anonymous others also share’. In turn, the rituals that are shared can become a powerful indicator of identity. Whitehouse (2004, p. 93) observes that although ‘people who attend church regularly do not need to have quasi-theoretical knowledge of the links between standing and singing, kneeling and praying, and sitting and listening, such knowledge is bound to emerge over time’. Such knowledge can then articulate particular identities that are shaped more by the common
performance of the ritual than by more abstract theoretical considerations. In his study of the religious influences on the cities of Boston and Philadelphia, Baltzell (1979, p. 367) recounts the story of an eminent Boston Unitarian commenting to an Episcopalian friend, ‘Eliza, do you kneel down in church and call yourself a miserable sinner? Neither I nor any member of my family will ever do that!’ (emphasis in original).

It is out of such shared practices that a sense of community can emerge. However, as we have seen in the case of Joseph Smith, something more is needed to develop that sense. In his case, it was absence that suggested what was needed:

Some blame rests with the more influential older members of each of the social groups. Whatever their financial status they could have, had they wished, used their influence within their own groups to introduce social and cultural activities to the whole community. Those with the financial means bore the greater responsibility for the poor provision of leisure activities; they had the means to give a lead in any endeavour to finance desirable improvements. In our village they strongly resisted any kind of development which was suggested. The more articulate members made little effort to bridge the divisions between the social, cultural and religious groups. (Smith, 1993, p. 112)

If we turn back to the example of religious rituals, then behind the performances that were produced and became more powerful for the sense of their naturalness lay further practices. We can term these organizing routines. That is, somebody had to set the stage on which the performances unfolded. The nature of such organizing routines varied across religious traditions. In particular, those involved in the routines varied, with some traditions giving more space for the participation of the lay (Mutch, 2020). In some Protestant traditions space opened up for lay participation in organizing practices. Such participation formed a training school for leadership in other activities, such as has been demonstrated for local leadership of trade unions in the UK (Moore, 1974). Leadership tends to have connotations of elite leadership but examining how leaders are formed at a local level and their activities might be one way in which shared practices cohere into something we then label as community. Such organizational routines are devised in order to facilitate the practical implementation of wider logics but can have the unintended consequence of providing training in forms of action that can then be transposed to other settings. In this way they can form to-hand resources for making concrete the rather vaguer feelings of shared activity that can be characterized as community.

Elite practices can be influential in shaping the taken-for-granted ways in which people at a local level conceive of the nature of community. Lounsbury (2007) has pointed to the historical differences between financial management practices in Boston and New York; religious practices in Boston, as we have seen, helped to shape such differences. That brings us back to the question raised by Glynn (2008) of the ‘character’ of places. While it is important not to let such a focus obscure very real differences, equally there does seem to be something in the historical emergence of locally based patterns of ideas that shapes what is taken for granted as the spirit of a place, something which is often only evident in comparative perspective (Simons et al., 2016). Thus Tony Lane, in his critical account of the history of Liverpool, speaks of the enduring impact of the rhetoric deployed by the wealthy ‘old families’, often summed up in the aphorism, ‘Manchester Men, Liverpool Gentlemen’. Their deployment of grandiose talk of Liverpool as a ‘world city’, argues Lane (1987, p. 82), passed to others whose livelihood in the city was dependent upon a continuation of its traditional role as a port. The sense of stature that Liverpool people have of themselves is due in part to the extravagant language once used so readily and frequently by the ‘old families’.

So what might be equally important in the study of networks and localities as communities is the examination of the rhetoric that is deployed. This is not rhetoric in the sense that it is used in opposition to ‘reality’ (although the smoothing
over of inconvenient features can be one objective) but in the sense of persuasion, of self and others. We return here to the observation by Williams (2011) of the universally positive connotations that the label community conveys. For the social anthropologist Anthony Cohen, community is a mental construct, not ‘a structure of institutions capable of objective definition and description’ (Cohen, 1985, p. 19). It is drawn upon as part of sensemaking: ‘people assert community, whether in the form of ethnicity or of locality, when they recognize in it the most adequate medium for the expression of their whole selves’ (Cohen, 1985, p. 107). We might note here that people use the term to describe collectivities which are not shaped either by place or choice, as Brint has in his typology. Rather, as in Cohen’s example of ethnicity, people possessing the same perceived objective characteristics (in the sense that they did not choose them) can choose to define themselves as a community, often regardless of the scale and nature of the internal divisions the collectivity might otherwise possess. If that is an accurate assessment, then it casts doubt on regarding community as a logic shaping action, rather than as an outgrowth of and justification for that action. Again, Richard Sennett draws our attention to the ‘dark side’ of community when he observes that a key feature of what he terms ‘the intimate society’ is ‘destructive gemeinschaft’ (Sennett, 2002, p. 220). By this, he was referring to the construction of community as a shared structure of feeling, defined against those who did not share such feelings, in which the focus becomes not on shared action and the content of action, but feelings and how they are expressed. This focus on community as feeling, he argued, had destructive effects on attempts to build relationships between unconnected persons.

Myths of an absence of community, like those of the soulless or vicious crowd, serve the function of goading men to seek out community in terms of a created common self. The more the myth of empty impersonality, in popular forms, becomes the common sense of a society, the more will that populace feel morally justified in destroying the essence of urbanity, which is that men can act together, without the compulsion to be the same. (Sennett, 2002, p. 255)

While the language of ‘civic duty’ might seem rather austere and forbidding in contrast to the warmth of community, perhaps it directs us to the ideas of civil society in which distinctive institutions each with their own positions and practices provide forums for the resolution of disputes and the progressing of shared action. Such seems to be the import of the defence of bureaucracy by Paul du Gay (2013) and the claim by Friedland that ‘It is not racial or religious, but institutional multiplicity – the birth, death, settlements and war of the gods – that is the greatest political and theoretical challenge of our time’ (Friedland, 2018b, p. 1400).

**Community: Emergent Property, Rhetoric, Value**

The talk of civic society takes us on to the terrain of political science. Likewise, notions such as community have also been deployed and deconstructed in disciplines such as social anthropology and geography (Mair, Wolf, & Seelos, 2016). However, I take it that our main concern and focus as organizational scholars is the nature of organizations. This has two aspects. One, and it is the one which has been most prominent in the examples we have discussed so far, is the impact of community (however conceptualized) on organizational action. There is a second contribution, however, and that is the impact of organizations on the nature of small-scale social groupings of the type often characterized as communities. Such impacts might be an indirect and unintended consequence of organizing for other purposes, such as the training in leadership provided by chapel committees or the widespread literacy engendered by the provision of basic schooling in order that the faithful can read religious material for themselves.

If we consider community not as a logic in its own right but as an emergent property from the confluence of a number of societal logics then
we need in turn to consider the place of organizations in the logics perspective that Friedland has developed. The answer is that organizations have not been considered in his formulations, although they do have a place in my development of his ideas (Mutch, 2018, 2019). Table 1 takes the institutional orders I discuss there and provides some illustrative examples for each logic. Not only do organizations emerge to facilitate collective aspirations towards institutional substances but they also give rise to collective identities that can in turn generate organizational forms such as professional associations or trade unions. The examples given in Table 1 can only be illustrative, given the range of organizations that constitute institutional orders. There is also a bias, that I acknowledge, towards the organizations characteristic of institutional orders with which I am familiar; I am aware, for example, that the term ‘congregation’ is an organizational form particular to Christian forms of religion. The bias in these examples is towards ‘traditional’ forms of collectivity, although the framework could be extended to more virtual forms, as noted below. However, given these caveats, the examples provided, it is hoped, are suggestive of the range of organizations that might have an impact on community formation. In particular, I want to suggest that we start from institutional logics as bundles of substance and practices in order to identify what is distinctive about the organizational forms that are spawned. Organizations as bundles of practices given relatively enduring form are not just economic in nature, although such organizations are of great importance, not least in often forming to-hand templates for other forms of organizing. Rather, institutional logics lead to distinctive forms of organization in order to pursue the substances that motivate them. Thus we have the partnership form of enduring importance in the law, or the regiment in the military, as well as the religious congregation. These are just examples of the myriad of organizational forms that emerge from distinctive logics and which, in their turn, can contribute to the particular nature of communities as they emerge. Such communities might also emerge from the distinctive identities that emerge from logics, sometimes cemented in professional associations, as in the law, or in other organizational forms, such as regimental associations in the military. Here the impact of technology might be seen in the creation of new forms of association, such as the ability of mothers to be in contact with each other on platforms such as Mumsnet, facilitating, some might argue, a sense of shared experience.

Tying community into a framework of institutional logics, logics which possess distinctive characteristics of their own but which interact in relations of contradiction or complementarity can thus form a useful means of exploring the emergence of a variety of forms of small-scale social structure. Often the implications are seen in contemporary debates in negative fashion, given the impact of forms of economic activity on such social arrangements. The dominance of

| Institution | Organization | Occupational collectivity | Positive impact on community | Negative impact on community |
|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Religion    | Congregation | Priests                  | Leadership experience        | Fracturing by belief          |
| Play        | Sports club  | Elite athletes           | Local identification         | Mobile franchises            |
| Knowledge   | School       | Teachers                 | Neighbourhood hub           | National curriculum          |
| Military    | Regiment     | Veterans                 | Local recruitment           | National recruitment         |
| Politics    | Council      | Social workers           | Local offices               | Centralization               |
| Law         | Police       | Police officers          | Neighbourhood policing      | Remote call centres          |
| Family      | Farm         | Mothers (Mumsnet)        | Long established residents  | Dispersed settlement patterns |
| Economy     | Retail company | Shop assistants       | Independent shops           | Branded national chains      |
| Medicine    | Hospital     | Doctors                  | Community hospital          | Centralized hospitals        |
high streets, for example, by ubiquitous branded outlets dilutes local distinctiveness. Similarly, the removal of local physical manifestations of logics, such as the local police station or council office, often under the banner of performance management and efficiency, can also undermine local senses of belonging. One notes here the importance of material objects, as Friedland (2018a) has argued. However, once emergent over time from the conjunction of particular logics, community in itself becomes a value which can be espoused and which finds its place in persuasive rhetoric (Gehman, in press). It often becomes attached to pervasive traditions. The school of history which looked at the ‘invention of tradition’ often did so in order to debunk traditions that, as the term suggest, had been consciously invented (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). However, this is to downplay the extent to which traditions, however shaky their origins in actual historical events, become powerful factors in sustaining ideas of local belonging (Molotch, Freudenburg, & Paulsen, 2000). For example, the pithead wheels that stand at the entrance to many former mining villages in the UK form a material symbol of a particular form of community, one founded in specific occupational identities that may now have passed but which have left their mark.

**Conclusion**

The enduring allure of community is understandable given the connotations that Williams (2011) reminds us of. However, its use can often be misleading when we move from everyday use to specific analysis. There would seem to be three implications of our review of the term. The first is that the idea that community is a central institutional order with a distinctive logic is not persuasive. The resources that Friedland presents us with in his formulations of logics as a combination of substance and practices enable us to think through what those logics might be and how they present in any particular conjuncture of time and place. In so doing, I argue that there are better candidates for the status of institutional order that deserve more of our attention, such as the law. Based on the shared attachment to the substance characterized as ‘justice’, a wide range of distinctive practices, positions and organizational forms constitutes an institutional order with powerful consequences for social action. The law possesses a distinctive logic proper to itself that enters relations of contradiction or complementarity with other institutional logics, something I have argued is not to be found in notions of community as logic. The second is that it remains the case that there is considerable value in examining the local context of action but that we need to be conscious of the wider connotations of using the term ‘community’ to label these. Community is an emergent property of shared practices and as such acts as a filter and mediator of the impact of societal logics. As such it is an important part of our analyses, complementing sites such as the field or the organization. However, it is important in viewing it as such a site that we pay due attention to the contending forces that play out. In particular, examination of the historical emergence of taken-for-granted practices and ways of thinking is important in giving a rounded perspective on how logics may be blended, mediated or resisted (Simons et al., 2016, p. 573). That leads to the third observation, that as well as taking care in the use of community as a term of analysis we should also pay attention to the way in which the term is mobilized in contexts, be they geographical or networked. There might be much value, that is, in considering the use of community as a persuasive and pervasive form of rhetoric. For organizational scholars there are two implications. One is the way in which local contexts shape the space of possibilities for organizational action. The second is that organizations are themselves crucial parts of local or network ecologies and deserve their place in the evaluation of the emergence and sedimentation of ideas of community. Both need us to pay more attention to the nature and status of community as a concept.

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**Note**
1. In addition to entering via a more indirect route, as when Venkatraman et al. (2016) use their source for their definition of community as Smets, Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee (2015, p. 934), who in turn draw on Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury: ‘the community logic has attracted some attention as an alternative framework for organizational behavior’.

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