ABSTRACT
This paper analyses the phenomena of co-existence of competing moral principles in a university merger. In doing so, the paper builds on Boltanski and Thévenot’s theoretical framework of orders of worth to account for the ways in which different social actors, both inside and outside academia, actively engage in justification work to solve disputes arising from mergers between universities. This justification work is empirically explored through illustrative examples involving the university merger between the Universities of Joensuu and Kuopio, which resulted in the establishment of the University of Eastern Finland in 2010. Based on the findings, the paper offers a new micro-level insight into the composition of novel academic communities as well as academic personnel who have to cope with the plurality of moral principles and resolve legitimacy struggles on a day-to-day basis during and after the merger.

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Introduction
Since the early 1990s, the university institution and its operational environment have changed significantly. The neoliberal principles of ‘New Public Management’, promoting the ideas of effectiveness, efficiency, marketisation and competition, were the main driving force for higher education (policy) reforms globally. Many reforms have taken the form of university mergers that aim at various administrative, economic, academic and societal benefits, such as maximisation of economies of scale, improvement of visibility and status in the global market of higher education, and more direct impact on national and regional economic and social objectives. It is therefore not surprising that university mergers have become a popular research theme in higher education studies over the past two decades. Scholars around the world have conducted a reasonable amount of research on university mergers in general, on the rationales of mergers, on the attributes of (un)successful mergers, and on the tensions and complexities that a merging process entails (e.g. Skodvin 1999; Harman and Meek 2002; Pinheiro, Geschwind, and Aarrevaaara 2013; Välimaa, Aittola, and Ursin 2014; Curaj et al. 2015; Pinheiro,
In a theoretical sense, the perspective of organisational theory, including resource dependence, structural contingency, strategic management and leadership approaches, has prevailed among scholars studying structural factors of higher education mergers (Pinheiro, Geschwind, and Aarrevaara 2016b, 2016c). Somewhat less attention has been given to culture-related factors – histories, cultures, values, beliefs and locations – that are all vital to comprehension of the merger process (Välimaa, Aittola, and Ursin 2014). The existing research on university mergers, however, does not examine in detail moral factors or contents influencing how social actors within the merging universities negotiate and justify what is considered to be a legitimate or worthy outcome. One could claim that, in addition to moral factors and justification processes, micro-level research on individual activities and coordinated interactions both within and between universities is still tenuous (Blaschke, Frost, and Hattke 2014, 712). Our understanding of how justification processes play out on a micro-level during organisational change will remain limited until we have sufficient empirical studies stressing the importance of the active actors and the social world that ‘does not appear as a place of domination suffered passively and unconsciously but more like a space intersected by a multitude of disputes, critiques, disagreements and attempts to produce fragile local agreements’ (Jagd 2011, 345–346).

For university personnel, the merger process represents a breakdown in the normative order that creates a contested, pluralistic space intersected by a myriad of aims, arguments, disputes and attempts to produce more or less lasting agreements and compromises. As educated and capable actors, the participants tend to justify their standpoint by using a relatively limited set of moral principles or grammars of the common good (Blokker 2011; Ylä-Anttila and Luhtakallio 2016). In this article, I examine how university personnel, working both in the highest positions in university administration (rectors and directors of administration) and within the mid-level of the organisational hierarchy (deans, departmental heads and professors), engage in justification work and use moral principles to reconcile disputes arising from university mergers. This question is analysed by applying Boltanski and Thévenot’s theory of justification (Boltanski and Thévenot [1991] 2006; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Thévenot 2007). The framework offers a fruitful way to study the critiquing and negotiating dynamics that frame decision making in a pluralistic context – such as a merger – where the presence of clashing moral principles is likely to be high (Cloutier and Langley 2013, 369).

The article proceeds as follows. First, the basic ideas of the typology of moral justifications are summarised – ‘orders of worth’ or ‘worlds’ as proposed by Boltanski and Thévenot. Second, the empirical case of the University of Eastern Finland (UEF), formed in 2006–2010 via a merger, is presented in a broader context. Third, the qualitative data used in this study is described as well as the methodological approach. Fourth, an analysis is made of how the management group responsible for the whole merging process and internal working groups responsible for the actual planning work of the new amalgamated faculties used different orders of worth in justification, critique and attempts to produce consensuses or compromises in the university organisation. Finally, the findings are summarised and discussed.
Orders of worth in a university context

Universities are pluralistic organisations (Kraatz and Block 2008) that encompass numerous small and different worlds (Clark 1989). These worlds are inhabited by various academic ‘tribes’ and other subcommunities that have their distinctive cultural characteristics (Becher 1987; Välimaa 1998). Similarly, social actors within universities have adopted different socially accepted definitions of the common good, and occasionally these ‘moral grammars’ (Blokker 2011, 253) collide. The likelihood of such collision is high in a merger that deinstitutionalises the stability and endurance of current institutional structures and creates a great deal of uncertainty among university personnel and their identity conceptions (Puusa and Kekälä 2015). Thus, the merging of universities is often a dispute over legitimacy or worthiness that may require social actors in management, faculties, departments, and service units to justify their positions within the new university.

In this article, the concept of ‘orders of worth’ of Boltanski and Thévenot ([1991] 2006) is drawn upon to address the issue of how agreements are reached in the merging process. Orders of worth, or worlds as the authors later called them, are legitimate forms of common good that date back to long philosophical processes concerning moral worth (Wagner 1999, 343–344). These orders provide a widely shared cultural toolkit for justifying claims in debates and negotiations by offering shared guidelines for social actors, and therefore operating as a means for reaching an agreement (Boltanski and Thévenot [1991] 2006, 65–79; Patriotta, Gond, and Schultz 2011, 1809; Ylä-Anttila and Luhtakallio 2016). The author’s intention is to analyse how actors reflexively engage in “justification work”, criticising or justifying particular orders of worth in specific situations’ (Jagd 2011, 346).

In universities situated in complex modern societies, several legitimate orders of worth can coexist, even though it is also possible to find hierarchies amongst these orders. In other words, their relevance may change in line with the situation’s characteristics (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 167). Six orders of worth are civic worth, domestic worth, the worth of fame, market worth, industrial worth and inspired worth (Boltanski and Thévenot [1991] 2006, 159–211). Afterwards network worth was attached to the original framework by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005). Brief descriptions of these seven orders in a university merger context are presented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, orders of worth consist of concepts and principles but also material factors and physical structures which together form the framework for practical action.

In this sense, the approach has similarities to institutional theory, especially to the institutional logics perspective, which offers a useful lens through which to analyse the plurality of norms and beliefs and to explicate the processes underlying institutional formation and change (Cloutier and Langley 2013). However, unlike orders of worth, institutional logics tend to ‘focus on identifying and following the trajectories of dominant logics’ (Jagd 2011, 355). While doing this, the perspective downplays agency and neglects conflicts and negotiations concerning what is the right and appropriate way to act in different contexts (Cloutier and Langley 2013, 371). Therefore, it would be useful to seek a rapprochement between the constraining power effects of institutions (institutional theory) and individuals’ capacity for agency and resistance (the orders of worth framework), as Cloutier and Langley (2013) have suggested.
When a university merger occurs, different actors are negotiating which worth or world should predominate. Lobbying takes place in two ways. First, actors favouring one worth tend to criticise the principles underlying other worlds. Second, they draw on cultural, symbolic and material resources from their chosen worth to justify why the perspectives of that specific worth should apply to the given context. Boltanski and Thevenot (2006) call these judgements and justifications tests of worth in which opponents argue on similar grounds. The purpose of these tests is to clarify who or what is more or less worthy and to resolve disputes between actors with different degrees of legitimacy (Patriotta, Gond, and Schultz 2011, 1809; Cloutier and Langley 2013, 367).

Clashes between different orders of worth can be resolved in many ways. Boltanski and Thevenot (2006) operate with four different types of reconciliation: (1) resolution in one dominating worth at the expense of other dissenting views; (2) local arrangements aimed at loose cohabitation and temporal agreements; (3) a compromise developing a more lasting agreement that may become institutionalised over time; (4) an outcome in which collective action is not possible (Jagd 2011, 347; Cloutier and Langley 2013, 368). However, there may be more ways to reconcile disputes than these four types mentioned. These reconciliations will be engaged in more depth while interpreting the empirical findings.

The establishment of the university of Eastern Finland in a broader context

The Finnish higher education system went through a major policy reform in the early 2000s. The old geographically expansive and system-centred policy that was developed rapidly after World War II was changed for a policy based on common European reform initiatives emphasising allocation of resources into regions and fields that were...
seen as essential for the development of (urbanised) knowledge-based economy (Tirronen and Nokkala 2009). One essential tool for this ‘structural development’ (Nokkala and Välimaa 2017) was larger unit sizes, which were sought by merging universities. A merger in the twenty-first century represents an effort to reach an agreement that would serve the interests of ‘Schumpeterian competition logic’ (Kohvakka, Nevala, and Nori 2019, 40), such as all-embracing competitiveness, better (inter)national reputation and greater institutional flexibility. Throughout the early 2000s, many officials, politicians and captains of industry constructed urgency around the need to reform the university system in Finland. These vigilant observers had noticed how many European countries, such as Denmark, Austria and the Netherlands, were vigorously reforming their universities in the name of flexibility, economic efficiency and the pursuit of excellence. According to them, there was a severe threat that Finland would fall behind these comparison countries (VNK 2004; cf. Nokkala and Välimaa 2017). In order for Finland to cope with the prevailing neoliberal conditions, it had to create new devices for making the state space more urban and innovative, that is, attractive for the new ‘creative class’. One such device was university mergers that could be seen as ‘the institutionalised form of a governmental intervention for making the state space optimal with a view to “success in the global market economy”’ (Kangas and Moisio 2012, 202).

The merger between the Helsinki University of Technology, the Helsinki School of Economics and the University of Art and Design was the flagship project in a national shake-up of higher education in Finland. It was voiced up in public in late 2005 and the process that eventually led to a full merger started in 2006. The new Aalto University began to operate in January 2010 (Aula and Tienari 2011). The emphasis on global competition was also evident in the other two university mergers in 2006–2010. In the city of Turku on the southwest coast of Finland, the University of Turku and Turku School of Economics decided to merge into the new University of Turku in order to retain Turku’s status as one of the most globally oriented university cities in Finland (Kunntu 2012). Likewise, in the more peripheral Eastern Finland, the University of Joensuu and the University of Kuopio sought to avoid being placed at the provincial or even national level. The merger of the two universities located 140 km (90 miles) from each other would ensure that – instead of two provincial universities – an international and multidisciplinary research university would be established in Eastern Finland (Vartiainen 2009).

The merger of the new University of Eastern Finland was implemented gradually from a strategic alliance (2006) to a loose federation (2007) and finally into a full merger (2007–2010). The merger was complementary by nature, as one of the parent universities (the University of Joensuu) was a more comprehensive university with a commitment to humanities, social sciences, teacher education and natural science, and the other parent university (the University of Kuopio) was specialised in health sciences and allied natural and social sciences. The aim of the merger was the integration of campuses, and establishment of interdisciplinary research groups and educational programmes which would reduce administrative costs and produce organisational synergies, especially in scientific operations. Although the outcome was predominantly positive and the merger succeeded, there were several occasions when complex cultural, power and moral factors created conflicts and hindered the process (Tirronen, Aula, and Aarrevaara 2016; Vartiainen 2017). Next, I will delve into the analysis of these factors and conflicts in more detail.
Empirical materials and analysis

For the study presented in this article, I analysed a wide range of minutes and memos regarding the establishment process of the UEF in 2006–2010. These archival historical sources, created at the time of the events being researched, were rich in documents from leaders who were responsible for the merger, but they also included material about other actors operating at the faculty and departmental levels. The archival documents were supplemented with newspaper accounts and 19 semi-structured interviews of (former) rectors, directors of administration, deans, heads of department and professors conducted in 2018 and 2019. All interviewees were key actors in the merger process. They were identified by studying minutes, memos and newspaper articles, and through snowball sampling during interviews. This ensured that many voices were heard that covered both supporters and opponents of the venture.

As contemporaneous sources, archived documents and newspaper articles offered ‘nonintentional evidence’, that is, events from the past that were ‘not made with the intention of revealing the past to us, but simply emerged as part of normal life’ (Megill 2007, 25). Interviews, on the other hand, represented a secondary testimony since they were collected almost ten years after the merger. Due to the temporal distance, informants’ memories, however accurate and vivid, are filtered through subsequent information from media and other sources. Moreover, they may be overlaid by nostalgia or twisted by a sense of grievance about deprivation in the merger which became established only in later years. Despite these limitations, the interviews interacted with written sources throughout: reading the documents helped to ask different questions of the interviewees, and the oral testimonies reconstructed the ideas and practices of academic people in their own words, rather than relying solely on the official record and the observations of academic collectives such as a management group or a department council. Interestingly, although a decade had passed since the merger of the two universities, the interviewees were still performing justification work, which shows how oral material can provide valuable evidence of how past events continue to evolve in the minds of the persons concerned (Tosh 2010, 313–314, 320–322; see also Appendix 1).

Sources used in this study are representations or summaries of disputes – snapshots of complex conflicts. The arguments the sources reveal is the result of choices made by the actors involved in justification work. To approach the justification work, I draw on Ylä-Anttila and Luhtakallio’s (2016) Justification Analysis, which takes into account the relations of different orders of worth within one argument. In the analysis, key actors in the texts are located and their efforts to justify their viewpoints to the addressee are analysed. I tracked arguments and other means through which actors aimed at a certain outcome, and considered whether these efforts referred to any specific worth or to combinations of different justifications (See Table 2).

Following the example of Tamboukou’s thematic analysis (as quoted in Riessman 2008, 63–67), I began my research by reading archival materials, newspaper articles and transcribed interviews on a superficial level. The first reading provided an overview

| Table 2. Elements of justification work (after Ylä-Anttila and Luhtakallio 2016). |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Who**: speaker | **To whom**: addressee | **How**: means | **What**: aim | **Why**: justification |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
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of the themes which the actors emphasised when talking about the merger and its goals. The second reading was rather more profound, as I circled and highlighted words and phrases that had approximate references to justification work processes. After a cursory reading, I read the documents again more thoroughly, analysed them and looked for statements, counter-narratives and other practices related to different orders of worth in order to make sense of the moral dimension of how academic people engage with each other during a merger process. During the analysis, I constantly moved back and forth between empirical sources and Boltanski and Thévenot’s theory on justification, which served as a resource for interpretation of written and spoken material.

Next, I revisit the establishment of the UEF from the perspective of justification work. I specify and illustrate justification work by the management group consisting of rectors and directors of administrations, and then explore the same work by taking two illustrative examples from the faculty level. The first example illustrates the building process of the Faculty of Health Sciences which is located only in one campus (Kuopio), and the second deals with the establishment of the Faculty of Science and Forestry which has activities in two campuses (Joensuu and Kuopio). By selecting these two examples, it is possible to explore the tensions that were related to divergent administrative and management cultures in the two merging universities (Faculty of Science and Forestry), but also the tensions that were more symbolic and evolved from hierarchy and equality issues between different disciplines (Faculty of Health Sciences).

The management group: ‘the trinity’ of network, market and industrial justifications

The management group included two rectors and two directors of administration of the universities of Joensuu and Kuopio. In addition, the vice-rector of the University of Joensuu acted as a legal expert in the group. The quintet had significant responsibility and authority in the merger. They led the planning process for the organisation and academic structure of the merging universities, in which 14 existing faculties were merged into four interdisciplinary faculties. A large amount of knowledge capital accumulated in the hands of this inner circle. However, the management group was dependent on the university boards of Joensuu and Kuopio, who made the final decisions on the organisation and academic structure of the new university. Student and trade unions, but also external local stakeholders such as municipalities and business organisations, were strongly represented in the university boards (Tirronen, Aula, and Aarrevaara 2016; Vartiainen 2017). Consequently, the management group could not afford to anger these parties. In the worst case, serious contradictions between the management group and the university boards could have jeopardised the realisation of the whole merger.

In their justification work, the members of the management group resorted to three moral principles, or orders of worth, in which one worth was a consequence of the other. According to the management group, universities of the twenty-first century were operating under the influence of increasingly dominating justificatory logic, the network worth, that emphasised adaptability, mobility and variety of personal contacts (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). As a newly elected rector, the rector of the University of Joensuu had stated already in late 1990s in the daily national newspaper that ‘the network society describes a new form of society in which the meaning of borders
disappears and network-like relations take their place’ (Helsingin Sanomat, December 6, 1999, translated from Finnish).

As mediating – or the art of connecting – had become valued in itself (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005), the management group feared that only so-called world cities, such as Helsinki in Finland, would be considered significant nodes or strategic hubs in a global network (Opetusministeriö 2006; cf. Castells 2002). In order for the peripheral and fragmented Eastern Finland to become a node in a global network, new academic structures had to be created via a merger. In the new university, a state of greatness would be based on an ability to spread the benefits of social connections within the region, and natural relationships would be based on trustworthiness as well as on adaptability to others’ needs (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). The rectors shared their views in the pages of the leading regional newspaper:

Cooperation and trust provide the only way to ensure that Eastern Finland and its universities succeed in the intensifying competition with Southern and Western Finland and their universities (Savon Sanomat, September 28, 2006, translated from Finnish).

In other words, the management group thought that there was an urgent need to de-emphasise the old ‘space of places’, where the competing universities of Joensuu and Kuopio built boundaries against each other, and stress, instead, the meaning of a new ‘space of flows’ (Castells 1999) where the merger represents cooperation that unifies not only the universities but the entire region of Eastern Finland and makes them both ‘competitive nodes’ in a global network of universities/regions (Memo of the management group 9.11.2007).

By using the term competitive, the management group argued that promoting the network worth also creates a positive outcome in terms of the market worth criteria (Ylä-Anttila and Luhtakallio 2016). However, the desire for competitiveness, which reflects the market worth, also required careful planning and the technical efficiency of the organisational structure; that is to say, a significant commitment to the beliefs of the industrial worth. And the management group was indeed ready to make such an ‘investment’ (Cloutier and Langley 2013, 367)

The University of Eastern Finland connects university campuses [network worth] in the region and enhances activities in teaching and research [industrial worth]. Interdisciplinary centres of excellence [network worth] and competitive degree programs [market worth] create a university with an effective research and teaching profile [industrial worth] that is internationally visible and increases the university’s attractiveness [market worth]. The competitive advantage [market worth] achieved through the merger [network worth] will strengthen the national and regional innovation system [industrial worth]. (Memo of the management group 9.11.2007, translated from Finnish)

The management group pushed through its goals at a very fast pace (Puusa and Kekäle 2013). It constructed urgency by linking the university’s competitiveness and attractiveness with an organisational structure emphasising large interdisciplinary faculties. At the same time, the management group deliberately prioritised four faculties as a solitary option, and pre-empted resistance with rhetoric describing haste (Granqvist and Gustafsson 2016). A professor who freshly criticised the organisational model of four faculties remembered one occasion where the management group’s response to change requests was that ‘the train has already left the station’ (Professor).
Despite this, there was no large-scale resistance to the proposed organisational structure. For example, trade unionists, who had a strong position in the university boards of Joensuu and Kuopio, adopted – albeit reluctantly – the sense of urgency created by the management group. Like many other social groups in the merging universities, they thought that by continuing as independent universities, Joensuu and Kuopio would have to bear ‘the stigma of a small university’, as one active member of the Finnish Union of University Professors put it (Professor). Especially the apparatus of the State following European Union higher education policy and the agencies of economic life (Tirronen and Nokkala 2009) used social, economic and political power that imbued stigma components – such as labelling, stereotyping, cognitive separation, negative emotional reactions and status loss – with discriminatory consequences (Link and Phelan 2001) to small universities.

Thus, in order to achieve and preserve prestige and recognition nationally and globally, trade unionists promoted the worth of fame as a moral principle to justify the need for the merger. What was interesting was that trade unionists, who usually believed in the civic worth in which worthy things are mutually agreed conventions and who avoided many characteristics of industrial and market justifications, were now willing to tolerate haste and top-down decision-making in order to achieve the top priority: to ensure ‘a life insurance’ for the continuation of university activities in Eastern Finland. From the point of view of reconciliation, the resolution was based on compromise between competing orders of worth, developing new terms on which a more lasting agreement was forged.

**Faculty of Health Sciences: a densely tied network and the dominance of civic worth**

The establishment process of four interdisciplinary faculties did not progress without contradictions. On the one hand, there were different views about the internal structural development in faculties. On the other hand, there was also intense discussion on more symbolic characteristics, such as a dichotomy between convergence and divergence or hierarchy and equality. Especially the latter issue was a matter of great concern to the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS). The FHS was located entirely on the Kuopio campus, and therefore, at first, it seemed that nothing would change in everyday life. However, differences of opinion became more pronounced as the negotiations shifted to addressing status and image issues.

The FHS consisted of the former faculties of medicine and pharmacy and the Department of Nursing Science. In the field of medicine, in particular, there were difficulties in abandoning faculty status and assuming a new position as a school. The Faculty of Medicine had been throughout its history the largest and most prestigious faculty in the University of Kuopio. Being ‘merely’ a school alongside two other schools (pharmacy and nursing science) ruptured the anchored tradition and threatened to stain the image of medicine in the eyes of other medical faculties in Finland. Interaction between the worth of fame (stressing popularity and prestige), and the domestic worth (emphasising preserving, protecting and nurturing practices) was clearly visible in the statement of medical students. ‘From the beginning, medicine has had a very strong image at the University of Kuopio. […] Our fear is that our special needs will not be understood if the new
faculty is led by an expert of another field’ (Memo from medical students 19.9.2007, translated from Finnish).

A distinguished professor of medicine, who also had a lot of experience as an academic unit leader, invested, too, in the worth of fame and the domestic worth, while recalling the discipline’s declining position in the status hierarchy:

When the Faculty of Health Sciences came, it meant that we were the only medical unit in Finland that was not an independent faculty. The position of the School of Medicine in relation to the position of medical faculties is not as strong. It did hinder cooperation at a national level for quite some time. The management of matters related to medicine must be in the hands of the head of the school and not in the hands of the dean of the faculty if he/she comes from another discipline (A professor of medicine, translated from Finnish).

However, inward-looking moral justifications to preserve the existing hierarchy and protect the ‘territory’ (Becher 1987) of the unit to which medical scientists belonged did not prevail. On the contrary, a more holistic approach of pharmacists and nursing scientists got the upper hand. As relatively small academic units, pharmacy and nursing science had become accustomed to adapting to new structures (on mimetic behaviour and institutional isomorphism, see DiMaggio and Powell 1991, 69–70). Pharmacists collaborated a lot with medical scientists in teaching and research, and nursing scientists, in turn, were interdisciplinary oriented and interested in the comprehensive promotion of human health and well-being. Thus, both disciplines were willing to promote the civic worth as a moral principle that justified the establishment of a large new faculty. To be more specific, both of them saw that the will of an individual discipline is subordinated to the general will and that no discipline should be placed in higher position compared to other disciplines. Two interview excerpts described this approach as follows:

Giving up the status of an independent faculty was difficult, above all, for medical scientists. Of course, we in pharmacy also wondered what this change meant to us. Are we going to be completely overshadowed by medicine? But in general, we had a view that I also shared that here we have a great opportunity to develop multidisciplinary thinking among three equally important disciplines (A professor of pharmacy, translated from Finnish).

In nursing science, health is an important metaparadigm. In addition, there are person, environment and nursing components. And for my part, when I worked as a superior, I always wanted to see what builds those things, what opportunities there are. In a way, I approached the reform from the perspective of opportunities, and I did not think that much about possible losses (A professor of nursing science, translated from Finnish).

All in all, the outward-looking civic worth supported well the ‘trinity’ of network, market and industrial justifications promoted by the management group. All four moral principles shared the idea of connectedness. In civic worth, the ones who accede to higher states of worth are not separate or solitary beings but rather the collective beings that are included within other larger collectives (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, 185). And, as indicated above, the aim of the management group was to create a larger, highly networked and efficient university that would be a winner or at least a survivor in the competition against other universities operating in a global higher education market. The management group and the representatives of pharmacy and nursing created together
a dense network of like-minded people. The network structure formed a mechanism for coordinating pressure on medicine to make it compliant with the network’s expectations (cf. Oliver 1991; Rowley 1997). In the end, the network succeeded in its intentions and the reconciliation was based on resolution in one dominating worth (civic worth) at the expense of the dissenting views of medicine, as the following quote from one professor of medicine indicates:

Rectors and directors of administration, who were responsible for strategic guidelines, had discussions with strong representatives of other disciplines. […] There was no such option that we [medicine] would have decided to drop out of the new Faculty of Health Sciences. From our point of view, the process was very top-down, although I want to emphasise that, in the end, the outcome was OK (A professor of medicine, translated from Finnish).

**Faculty of Science and Forestry: avoidance, defiance, compromise and conceptions of the common good**

Compared with the FHS, the Faculty of Science and Forestry (FSF) was more pluralistic and it covered a wider range of disciplines, including biology/bioscience, environmental science, physics and mathematics, chemistry, computer science and forestry. The idea of internal structural development of the FSF was to bring together the same disciplines in one school or department irrespective of the campus. The intention was that the three departments – the Department of Bioscience, the Department of Computer Science, and the Department of Physics and Mathematics – would operate on two campuses, in Joensuu and Kuopio. However, the plan raised a lot of campus-based rivalries inside the FSF, and in situations in which there was a dispute over which moral principles or orders of worth should underline collective action, actors rhetorically mobilised different critiques and resources in an endeavour to impose a particular worth on the situation (cf. Cloutier and Langley 2013, 367).

In the field of biology/bioscience, the proposal for a joint department was made by the representatives of the Kuopio campus. They saw that, as a bigger unit, the merged department would improve the position of the discipline in the internal hierarchy of the faculty and also optimise the use of human and material resources (e.g. laboratory facilities). In other words, they appealed to efficiency and performance as higher common principles of the industrial worth in order to support the domestic worth – the realm of ‘family’ in which the priority of actors is nurturing the interests of the discipline. The biologists in Joensuu, however, took a different approach. They, too, leaned on the principles of the domestic worth but defined the meaning of a ‘family’ differently. For them, the family was same as their own academic unit in Joensuu, not the discipline that also covered activities in Kuopio. Thus, they rejected the argument of their colleagues from Kuopio that promoting a bigger unit via merger (the industrial worth) automatically supports the other worth, in this case the domestic worth. Instead, the biologists in Joensuu were ready to follow the logic of the pure domestic worth to the end. They avoided any compromises and tried to protect their own territory by making arguments favouring arrangements such as loose cohabitation and coexistence.

Our profile in Joensuu is quite different from that of Kuopio. For example, degree structure and study modules are different in Joensuu and Kuopio. Therefore, we do not see that we
would compete for the same students in the future. Our unit, as a whole, is well-functioning and the atmosphere in the unit is very positive. In our view, the productive and active scientific community should not be 'burdened' by adding units from Kuopio to it, as those units clearly do not support our activities (Memo of the Department of Biology, Joensuu 3.11.2008, translated from Finnish).

In order to strengthen their position, Joensuu biologists arranged a meeting with the rector of University of Joensuu, where they made clear their readiness to oppose the merger of two departments. Due to the tight schedule, the rector was willing to avoid confrontation that could have significantly delayed the merging of the two universities. After hearing the view of his colleague, the rector of University of Kuopio stated that: 'If the Department of Biology wants to remain a separate institution, then so be it' (A note from a professor’s memo, translated from Finnish).

However, the reconciliation based on the arrangement of two separate departments of biology/bioscience was only temporary. Soon after the merger, the Department of Bioscience in Kuopio was dissolved and the subfields close to medicine and pharmacy were transferred to the Faculty of Health Sciences. The remaining subfields were incorporated into the Department of Environmental Science in Kuopio and the Department of Biology in Joensuu. In 2016, the Department of Biology and the Department of Environmental Science were merged into one department. The merger was made regardless of the fierce opposition of biologists. This time their arguments for the family-like community (the domestic worth) did not hold ground against the arguments of the rector and the dean emphasising 'interdisciplinarity, efficiency and competitiveness' (a combination of industrial and market justifications) within the new department (Vartiainen 2017).

Whereas avoidance, loose cohabitation and coexistence described a reconciliation in biosciences, in computer science and physics, defiance and compromise provided resolutions to conflicts between different orders of worth. In both disciplines, tensions were associated with efforts to create sharper campus-based profiles by developing the division of labour in undergraduate teaching, doctoral training and research. In the Department of Computer Science, the head of department and the dean of the FSF made a proposal to foster an internal division of labour, in which computer scientists on the Kuopio campus would focus on undergraduate teaching in Finnish and their colleagues in the Joensuu campus would focus on an international master programme and research. Similarly, in the Department of Physics and Mathematics, the representatives of Joensuu campus proposed that the bachelor education should be concentrated in Joensuu and that physicists in Kuopio should concentrate their resources on the research and the doctoral programme in applied physics that were both of high quality (Tirronen, Aula, and Aarrevaara 2016; Vartiainen 2017). Both plans were expressions of industrial worth, in which optimisation of resources and organisational effectiveness are noble pursuits.

In computer science, the plan attracted heavy opposition from the professors of Joensuu campus. They saw that giving up bachelor education would mean losing a functioning recruitment route. To criticise the risks associated with international master’s programmes, they wrote a letter to the editor to the regional newspaper: ‘In international master’s programmes, students come (if they come) from their own bachelor programmes. This route is capricious and involves significant risks that could lead to a shortage of IT experts in the Joensuu area.’ (Karjalainen, October 13, 2010, a letter to the
editor, translated from Finnish). The writing represented a conscious act made in public to reach an audience outside academia. It rejected the view that the division of labour between Joensuu and Kuopio campuses (the *industrial worth*) would nurture solidarity and serve the collective interests of the whole of Eastern Finland (the *civic worth*). Instead, the writing adopted the stance that linked the success of the Joensuu region to bachelor’s education offered in the region, as without this education, Joensuu is nothing (the *domestic worth*).

Professors who opposed the plan ‘agitated local entrepreneurs to support them’, as one proponent of the plan put it, and entrepreneurs who liked to hire Finnish-speaking rather than English-speaking employees accepted the invitation (Director). Together they created a relational network that elaborated and transferred the shared meanings and understandings associated with social structures between actors (Meyer and Rowan 1977). As the number of ties between network members increased, communication across the network became more efficient, which helped actors to produce shared behavioural expectations (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Rowley 1997). This highly dense network relegated the dean and the department head to a subordinate position to its well-organised opponents (Oliver 1991; Rowley 1997). In terms of reconciliation, the dean and the department head thought that in those circumstances collective action was not possible, and they had no other option but to comply with the defiance of the network.

At that point, I realised that this [our plan] would not work. I changed my mind and told [the Rector] that the plan was not worth implementing. The rector made a call to the chair of the university board on the spot and that project ended there (Director, translated from Finnish).

In physics, the subject of controversy was similar, but its consequences more far-reaching. The physicists on the Kuopio campus were not willing to give up the bachelor programme, as they saw it as the trojan horse that would weaken the ‘family’, that is, doctoral education and research on the Kuopio campus in the long run, as one physicist involved in the negotiations put it:

> My argument at the time was that if we did not have our own bachelor program, then in ten years it would have meant that master’s education would have waned here [in Kuopio] and then doctoral education as well. The reason for this was that the mobility of bachelors in this country was, and still is, low (Physicist, translated from Finnish).

Clashes between the *industrial worth* (arguments of physicists in Joensuu) and the *domestic worth* (arguments of physicists in Kuopio) led to a lack of mutual trust and a chilly atmosphere in the department that had to be reconciled in some way. In the autumn of 2010, the management and the board of the UEF decided to divide the physics field into two campus-based departments and, thus, relinquish one fundamental principle of the merged university, namely that campuses should not have the same discipline in two or more departments (Tirronen, Aula, and Aarrevaara 2016; Vartiainen 2017). By doing this, the top management of the university was ready to replace the original reconciliation plan of forced consensus with compromise. In forced consensus, the management group had defined beforehand the common interest (the rule of unitary disciplinary units) and it had thought that physicists in Joensuu and Kuopio would be willing to eliminate those parts of their moral doctrines that did not fit in with consensus.
However, as the overcoming of initial disagreement by reaching shared opinions failed and clashes continued, the top management chose compromise as a modality of agreement. In other words, by dividing physics into two campus-based departments, the board of the UEF was willing to recognise the particular, not the universal, nature of the interests in question, and that the merger should not aim to remove this state of affairs (see the inspired worth in Table 1). All in all, compromise proved to be a fruitful way to achieve reconciliation, as it inculcated tolerance, trust, and respect of others and, above all, of their moral autonomy (cf. Ankersmit 2002, 39–46). The following interview quote from the highest management position in the university’s administration supports this view:

The Department of Physics and Mathematics was quite a large department and the research profiles of the two campuses were different. I did not see the division of the joint department into two departments as a problem by any means. Now afterwards I have the impression that we gained peace in the field of physics without losing anything valuable (Director, translated from Finnish).

**Discussion and conclusions**

In the present study, the orders of worth framework (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) was used to examine how the justification work by different academic and stakeholder groups reflected the domain of the controversy as well as social, political and, above all, moral orientations in the context of a university merger. By illustrating how competing orders of worth coexist, and by showing how tensions inherent to their coexistence can be resolved, the findings highlight the flexibility and strategic nature of actors’ moral justifications during the controversy. As this article points out, the orders of worth framework offers a fruitful way to study how the uncertainty produced by conflicting orders of worth during a merger creates various opportunities for action, but it also

**Table 3. Summary: justification work in the establishment of the UEF.**

| What: Content | Who: Speaker | To whom: Addressee | How: Means | Why: Justification |
|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Establishment of the UEF | Management group | University boards | Constructing urgency | Combination of network, market, industrial (and fame) justifications |
| Faculty of Health Sciences (Joint faculty) | Management group, pharmacy and health science | Medicine | Dense network of like-minded people | Dominance of civic worth (in line with justification principles of the establishment of the UEF) |
| Faculty of Science and Forestry Biology/bioscience (Joint department) | Kuopio bioscientists | Joensuu biologists | Favouring economies of scale | Combination of industrial and market justifications (merged unit is more efficient and competitive) |
| Computer science (Bachelor education) | The dean and the department head | Joensuu computer scientists | Promotion of division of labour | Combination of industrial worth and civic worth (optimisation of resources serves the collective interests of Eastern Finland) |
| Physics (Bachelor education) | Joensuu physicists | Kuopio physicists | Promotion of division of labour | Dominance of industrial worth (optimisation of resources) |
illustrates how collective action is facilitated and institutional stability achieved (see Table 3; cf. Cloutier and Langley 2013, 369).

The orders of worth framework helps to address how (university) institutions are formed, maintained or changed at a micro level, i.e. how stability is negotiated locally by competent actors in public debates over what is worthy (legitimate) or not (Blokker 2011; Cloutier and Langley 2013). Therefore, the framework is suitable for case studies of university mergers. The seven orders of worth defined by Boltanski and Thévenot, although not exhaustive and all-encompassing, are relatively stable moral principles, and thus particularly appropriate for comparative research (Ylä-Anttila and Luhtakallio 2016). Institutional pressures do not necessarily produce similar convergent behaviour in merging universities across the world. Hence, it would be interesting to ascertain how social actors interacting with other social actors in different national and cultural contexts experience the plurality of orders of worth and use them in their justification work during a university merger.

The orders of worth framework assumes that actors have considerable capabilities to draw on plural orders of worth strategically to suit their objectives and purposes (Cloutier and Langley 2013). Although the framework helps to illustrate how ‘the social world does not appear as a place of a domination suffered passively and unconsciously’ (Jagd 2011, 345), one can gain the impression that the activities of actors are not sufficiently subject to socio-structural conditions (Honneth 2010, 380). To fill in this blind spot of the orders of worth framework, a researcher can lean on institutional theory, which tends to (over)emphasise the constraining power effects of institutions and social structures. For example this study has illustrated that even though the distinguished academic actors (the dean and the department head) were able to draw on the cultural-cognitive resources of the industrial worth to discursively and materially defend the idea of division of labour in computer science (bachelor education in Kuopio and international master programme in Joensuu), they did not succeed in their endeavour. The reason for this was the dense network of like-minded people (academics and external stakeholders) that acted as a structural constraint forcing the dean and the department head to comply with the networks’ expectations that were against the idea of division of labour.

To sum up, as no single theoretical approach will allow us to explain everything about social interaction in a university merger, future research needs to carefully consider the contribution of each possible theory and integrate these approaches into a more comprehensive framework. However, if scholars dealing with university mergers wish to explore and reveal the variety of competing moral principles in merging organisations, the orders of worth framework provides a valuable – and remarkably underused – tool for this purpose.

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## Appendix 1. Sources used in the study

| Main type of empirical sources | Most important data sources                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Purpose                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Minutes and memos             | Management group minutes and memoranda 2007–2009; Memoranda of working groups responsible for planning work at the faculty and the department level 2007–2009; Memoranda of individual professors and student organisations | Evaluation of contemporaries’ views, opinions and interpretations of the events related to justification work in a university merger (largely collective work and a result of negotiation)                                                   |
| Newspaper articles            | *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper, 1999; *Savon Sanomat* newspaper, 2006–2010; *Karjalainen* newspaper, 2006–2010                                                                                                                                  | Assessment of participants’ views and opinions on the topical issues related to justification work as well as higher education policy and university development (mergers)                                                               |
| Interviews                    | 19 semi-structured interviews of (former) rectors, directors of administration, deans, heads of department and professors, conducted in 2018 and 2019                                                                                           | Allow the voices of individual academics to be heard alongside the careful marshalling of social facts in the written (official) record                              |