



# New directions in institutional innovation ■■

---



**Eva Boxenbaum**  
Professor of Management  
Mines ParisTech  
& Copenhagen Business School

EGOS subplenary 04.07.2014

- **Institutional innovation** refers to “novel, useful, and legitimate change that disrupts, to varying degrees, the cognitive, normative, or regulative mainstays of an **organizational field.**” (Rafaelli & Glynn, forthcoming in Oxford Handbook of Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship: Multilevel Linkages.)



# The institutional family reunion

---

**Past < Future**



# Forgetting DiMaggio, are we?

He fathered the institutional entrepreneur in 1988



**Finding Family with DNA Testing**



# The embedded actor



# Why focus on the individual/ micro-social scale?

---



- To develop the **micro-foundations** of institutional innovation
- To render institutional theory **actionable**
- To co-construct knowledge **across disciplines** and **stop trench wars** with other sub-disciplines of management

# New directions

- Explain how new ideas and categories emerge at the individual and micro-social scale
  - Ideation in highly institutionalized fields
  - Tropes in new category formation
- Elaborate on how new ideas become institutionalized practice
  - Visual and material manifestations of ideas
  - New legal category formation

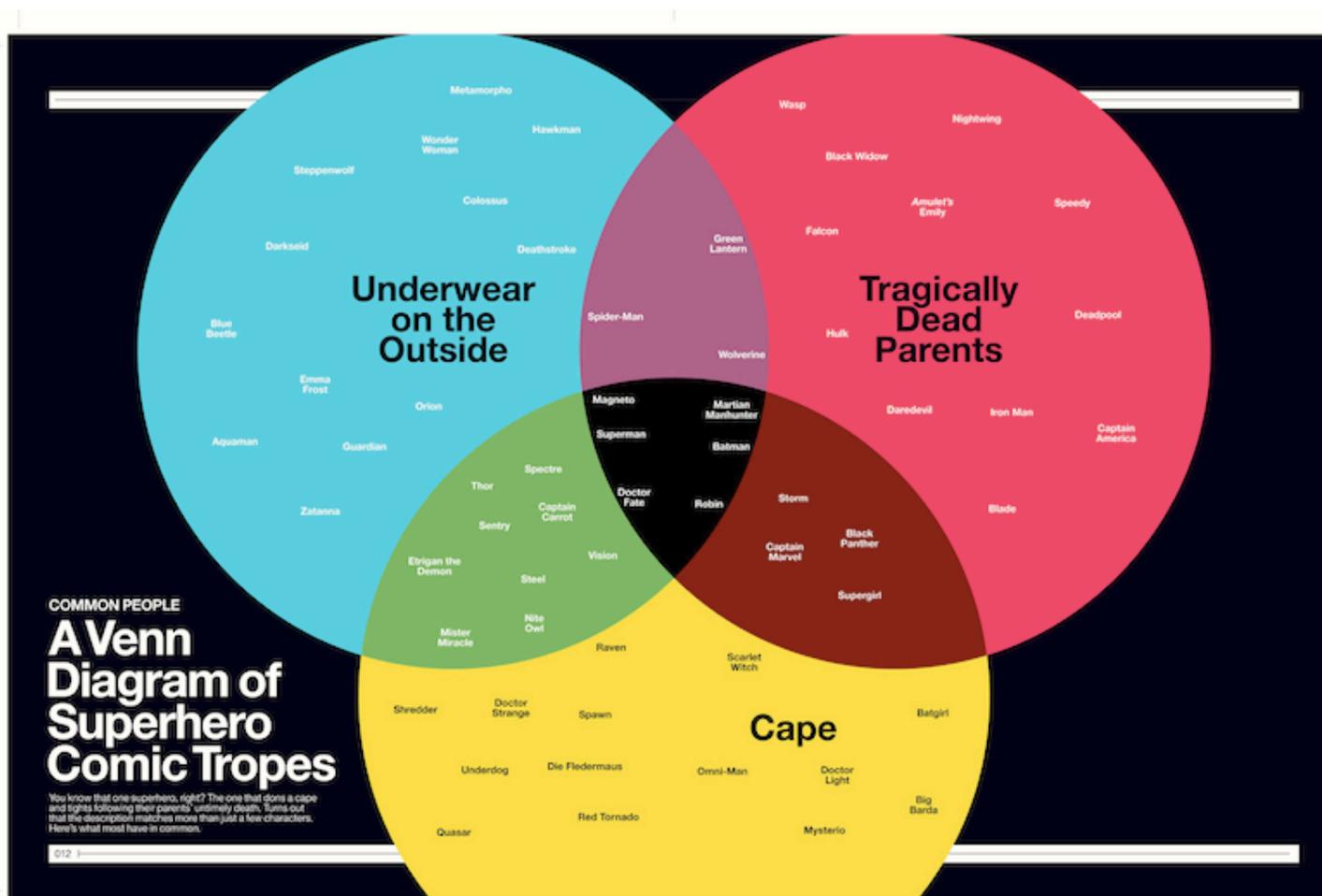


# Example from cognitive linguistics



Tropes in category emergence





# Tropes in category emergence

---

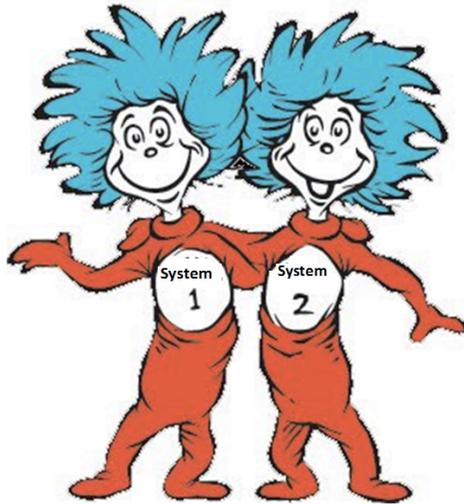
Institutionalization occurs as actors reciprocally create abstract typified categories of each other and each other's actions in order to make sense of the world and to facilitate social interaction. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967)

*How does an emergent category take form in the minds of a few individuals (micro-social scale)?*

- We know little about the emergence of new categories (Durand & Paoletta, 2013; Kennedy & Fiss, 2013)
- Tropes (figures of speech) can help us understand how new categories are created at the micro-social level
  - Metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, hyperbole

# Example from neuro- psychology

- »» Dual process models in idea generation within highly institutionalized fields

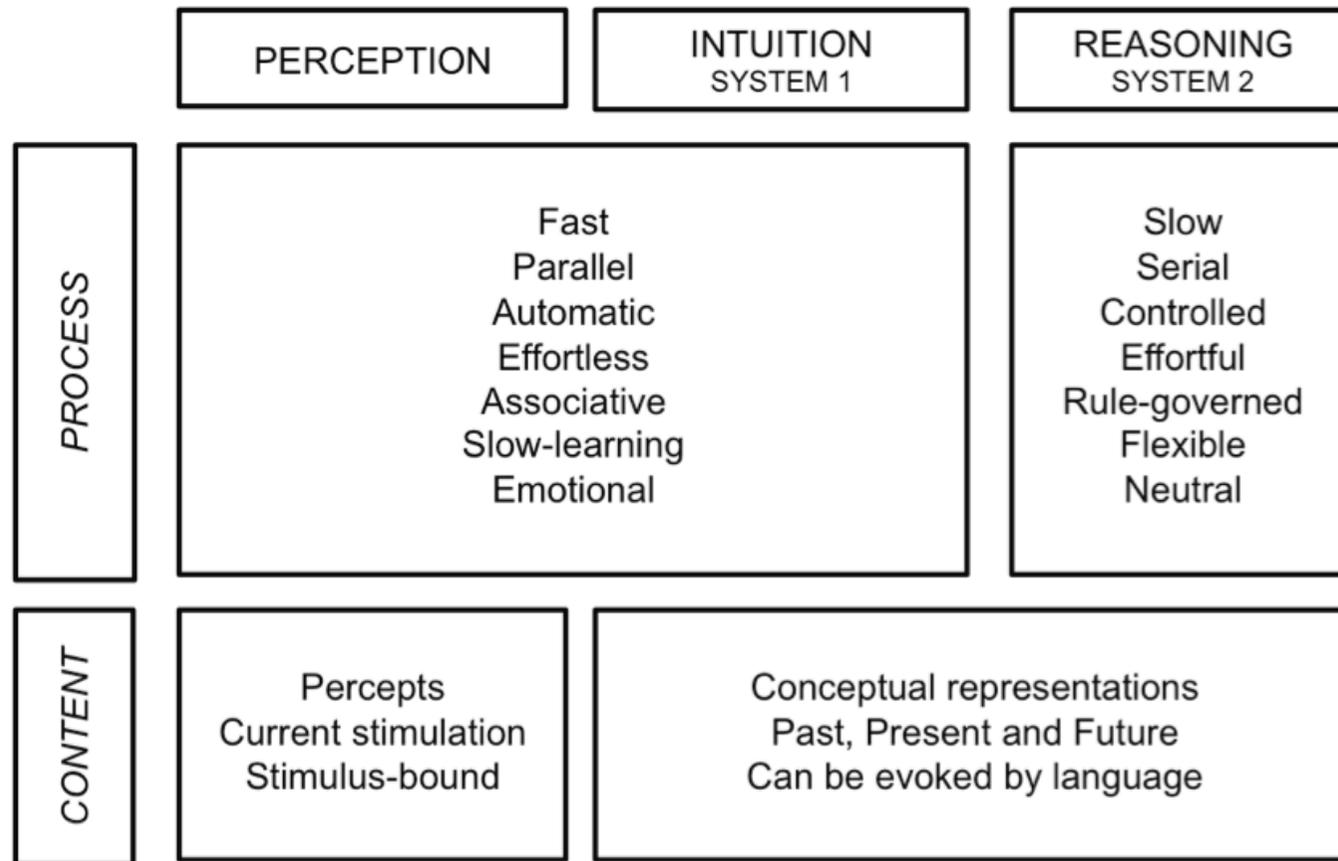


- 
- *How do embedded actors generate radically new ideas in highly institutionalized fields?*
  
  - No solid accounts in organization and management theory
    - Subconscious or conscious process?
    - Individual vs organizational vs field level factors?
    - Competing micro-processes
      - Brain-storming
      - Cognitive-linguistic models
      - Pragmatic-behavioural models
      - Formal-logical models

- Dual process model from neuro-psychology (Kahneman, 2011) can be adapted to ideation:
  - Generative System 1: implicit reproduction, incremental innovation.
  - Generative System 2: explicit search for new ideas, potentially radical innovation.
- A dual process model can help integrate disparate frameworks of ideation and create a more coherent account of how embedded individuals generate radically new ideas in highly institutionalized fields.

# Dual process model

○ <http://davesainsbury.com/dual-process-theory-in-the-operating-theatre/>



# What is blocking the path for these directions?

- Missing methods
- Missing multi-level theoretical frameworks
- Debates about the pertinence of studying individuals/micro social dynamics
- The notion of incommensurable paradigms



# What are the facilitating conditions?

---

- Many recent examples individuals and small groups disrupting markets and changing institutionalized practices.
- Paradigms are dying; bricolage is on the rise
- Research funds are increasingly allocated to applied and interdisciplinary research projects
- Companies are engaging more proactively in knowledge production, which favours action-orientation.

# Paths forward

---

- Keep investigating institutionally embedded actors
- Keep exploring disciplinary interfaces
- Drop paradigm wars and engage in (careful) bricolage

