

The six dimensions of organizational rationality

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Abstract

Rationalities shape the way individuals interpret information and engage within organizations. Differences in rationality can complicate collaboration. Therefore, comprehending its influence in organizations is crucial. The traditional approach to examining rationalities and their differences is qualitative, with very few studies using quantitative methods. To bridge this gap, we developed a questionnaire to measure organizational rationality across six dimensions: economic, creative, political, social, legal, and technical. This approach allowed us to identify variations in rationality within teams while embracing the complexity prevalent in pluralistic organizations. Our quantitative tool that measures rationalities in organizations can aid scholars and practitioners in gaining insights on influential dimensions and implementing reforms aligned to them.

Introduction

Diversity of tasks fulfilled by social groups in organizations contribute to a plurality of perspectives and rationalities. Rationality is a specific way of acting and reasoning that is logically consistent within a community of meaning (Schedler & Rüegg-Stürm, 2014). Individuals in such organizations interpret and respond to pluralism in their work environments (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Cloutier & Langley, 2007) by developing coping strategies, such as compromising between or combining contradictory requirements, ignoring certain requirements, or creating new ones (McPherson & Sauder, 2013). When attempting to describe and classify the coping practices of an organization, scholars have associated them with different rationalities (Cabantous et al., 2009), a concept similar to frames (Goffman, 1974), conventions (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006), institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012), *Leitideen* (Meyer et al., 2021), or culture (Schein, 1999).

Research on organizational rationality has benefited greatly from qualitative approaches, which have deepened our understanding of the diverse perspectives and complexities of organizations. However, scientific debates in these approaches are dominated by qualitative descriptions and concepts. For example, institutional research entails various data collection

methods, such as pattern deduction (Dunn & Jones, 2010; McPherson & Sauder, 2013), matching (Thornton, 2004; Thornton et al., 2012), and induction (Reay & Jones, 2016; Smets et al., 2012). Qualitative research usually studies two or three varying rationalities with regard to their commonalities and differences within an organization (Cabantous et al., 2009). While these qualitative insights have deepened our understanding of the diverse perspectives and complexities within organizations, they often lack standardized criteria for measuring rationality. Thus, even though they make each study unique, their applicability becomes limited across different organizations and social groups.

In this context, the purpose of our study was to develop a survey tool that could measure different types of rationality present within organizations. The measurement tool provided a standardized approach for capturing the diversity of rationality, allowing for large-scale analyses that were previously difficult to accomplish. Thus, the use of quantitative measurements in our study enabled us to gain a more precise understanding of how differences in rationality impacted organizational dynamics such as communication, decision-making, and conflict. High differences in rationalities are considered to be a source of misunderstanding and conflict in organizations (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Schedler & Rüegg-Stürm, 2014),

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and therefore, they need to be measured. As rationalities become measurable, the degree of likelihood or difference can be assessed, and expectations derived from concepts such as those of Besharov and Smith (2014) or Schedler and Rüegg-Stürm (2014) can be tested.

Conceptually, we developed Dising's (1962) archetypal rationalities and related theories in organizational studies to define the dimensions of rationality within organizations.

Methodologically, our study followed a two-stage approach to develop a validated survey tool to measure these rationalities. In the exploratory phase, we generated an initial set of 49 items by drawing on theoretical foundations and empirical data. This phase included a secondary qualitative data analysis of 68 interview transcripts with political and administrative representatives, which revealed six distinct dimensions of rationality. In the subsequent test phase, we refined these items through 'think-aloud' sessions with participants from various professional backgrounds. This phase also included two rounds of quantitative pre-testing. This process, conducted with 584 students and later with 882 employees in the financial sector, resulted in a final set of 32 items. Furthermore, a validation phase with 526 participants confirmed the reliability of our tool. It enabled us to effectively capture six rationality dimensions: legal, economic, political, technical, social, and creative. Our study provides scholars with a standardized method to quantitatively assess organizational rationality across diverse contexts and practitioners with a means to gain insight into varied perspectives of their teams.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section provides a conceptual overview of rationalities within organizations and examines the six dimensions shaping each rationality. We then describe the research design, which consists of an exploratory phase and a test phase. The data analysis section includes the results of the investigation, including construct and discriminant validity. Finally, we discuss the implications of this study and provide suggestions for future research.

Rationality in Organizations

Rationality can guide the cognitive process of decision-making in organizations. Scholars who have studied how organizations make decisions (Sadler-Smith & Burke-Smalley, 2015; Schneider, 1997; Blumer, 1969) suggest that individuals in an organization develop shared

interpretations through exchanges with others. Similarly, Berger and Luckmann (1995) argue that communities of meaning create and develop shared interpretations through constant interaction. Furthermore, teams in organizations usually adopt a common way of thinking, acting, and reasoning with reference to external reference models, so that their actions make logical sense (Schedler, 2003). We refer to such shared interpretations within a community of meaning as *rationality* (Berger & Luckmann, 1995; Hopf, 1998; ter Bogt & Scapens, 2011). Rationality can be defined as a specific way of speaking and acting that adheres to logical coherence when taking organizational decisions. In simpler terms, it represents the logic behind constructing one's own reality and simultaneously serves as a filter for perceiving the environment (Schedler, 2003). Thus, rationality provides a structured lens through which teams view and interpret actions, fostering consistent and aligned decision making within the organization.

In an organization, rationality is a result of social interaction within a given (situated) institutional setting (Cabantous et al., 2009; ter Bogt & Scapens, 2011). Social groups often interact with constructs and constantly reconstruct their shared rationality in discursive practice (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Morf, 1992; Steyaert et al., 1996). Actors within this social group self-confirm and receive confirmation from others that specific actions, arguments, or interpretations of information are rational (Jagd, 2011; Schedler & Rüegg-Stürm, 2014). New group members, assignments, or drastic experiences of success or failure may impact the shared rationality of a social group (Cabantous et al., 2009). Through this ongoing dynamic process, rationality becomes a guiding principle for communication and decision-making in a specific social group.

Many theoretical concepts such as functional subsystems with their specific rationalities (Luhmann, 1995), multiple rationalities in public organizations (van De Donk & Snellen, 1989), and fundamental social institutions (Thornton et al., 2012) are based on idealized rationalities or logic. Unfortunately, these theoretical assumptions have not been fully proven empirically. This allows for a reasonably clear typification, which creates reference values for later analyses, but nevertheless remains a simplification. Additionally, the impression that ideal-typical logic exists in organizations has triggered a wealth of discourse in institutional organization theory revolving around the so-

called “hybridization” of organizations (Mongelli et al., 2017). However, as Meyer et al., (2021) point out, organizations are not “purely mono-logical”; rather, they are hybrid from the start, shaped by multiple coexisting ways of thinking of their members.

Dimensions of Rationality in Organizations

Explicit descriptions of different rationalities can be found in the context of decision-making in public organizations (Diesing, 1962; Hoppe, 2003; van De Donk & Snellen, 1989) or in system-theoretical approaches to communication and decision-making (Luhmann, 1995; Parsons, 1969). Based on Diesing (1962), we included five prominent dimensions of rationality in the description of a rationality: political, legal, economic, social, and technical.

Political dimension: Power and influence

The political dimension of rationality is essentially about power (van De Donk & Snellen, 1989) and exerting influence (Brès et al., 2018). Weber defines power as “every opportunity to assert one’s own will within a social relationship, even against resistance, regardless of what this opportunity is based on” (Weber, 1978). Actors who show a high level of political dimension will thus enforce structures that maintain authority (Diesing, 1962).

Legal dimension: Formal and informal rules

Central to the legal/regulatory dimension of rationality are formal norms and rules of society that “create predictability and formal order” (Gross, 2013). Each rule is formulated for specific situations and defines what is prohibited or permitted (Diesing 1962). Together with informal rules, they provide a framework for people’s behavior. When actors stress regulative prescriptions in organizations, they often develop standardized or formalized procedures for deciding and acting (Heydebrand, 2003).

Economic dimension: Monetary transactions

At its core, the economic dimension is about transactional processes that seek to eliminate the inequality of distribution inherent in the system (Diesing, 1962; van De Donk & Snellen, 1989). Goods are not available at will but are scarce and unequally distributed, which is why there is competition for them (Diesing 1962:

21). Additionally, to trade goods, it must be possible to compare their values (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). Money serves this purpose by objectively recording the value of each good (Diesing 1962).

Social dimension: Human centricity, Interaction, and Integration

People and their relationships form the core of the social dimension. The dimension is characterized by socially recognizable trust-based expectations, values, beliefs, and social roles, oriented towards harmony and the common good (Diesing, 1962). The goal of social dimension is to integrate individual participants into a coherent and consistent social system (Diesing, 1962).

Technical dimension: Functionality and purpose

The technical dimension is focused on the the problem at hand or effective problem-solving (functionality/fulfillment of function). Actions, decisions, communication, and interactions are subject to clearly validated processes and findings that are characterized by a high degree of accuracy, clarity, and comprehensibility (Townley, 2008). The effectiveness of an action—that is, its lasting effect or continuance—is decisive (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). This emphasis on functionality has led van De Donk and Snellen (1989) to refer to scientific or paradigmatic rationality, suggesting that each context has its own functional system, and organizations must follow different technical paths to achieve success.

Methods

We employed a sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) and implemented a two-stage procedure to develop a survey questionnaire. In the iterative process of the exploratory phase around 49 items were generated. Following this, a testing phase was

conducted for various groups, resulting in 32 final items.

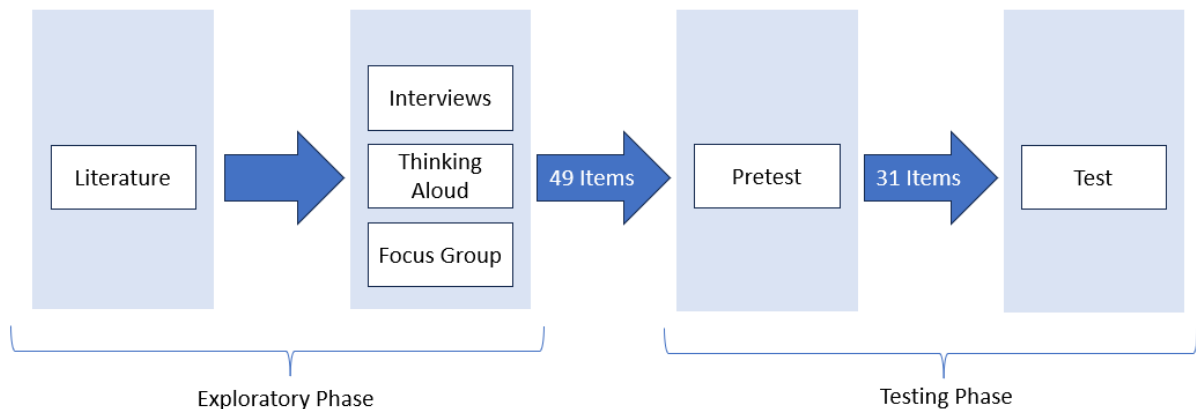


Fig 1: Exploratory and testing phase

Exploratory phase

Item generation for a rationality measurement tool was based on both theory and empirical research, as suggested by Gehlbach and Brinkworth (2011) and includes several steps. To identify existing definitions and applications of the concept of rationality, we searched for relevant titles and abstracts on the Web of Science and Scopus. Our search terms included “rationalit*” and “logic” in combination with “organization” or “organisation” with the wildcard (*) capturing variations like “rationality.” This approach yielded a diverse range of studies on rationality within organizational contexts. The findings were evaluated in the context of decision-making, reasoning, and interpreting information to elaborate on a set of indications for rationality in organizations.

Next, we conducted a *secondary qualitative data analysis* following the guidelines of Chatfield (2020). We analyzed 68 transcripts of interviews with representatives of politics and public administration. These interviews were conducted in Switzerland between 2003 and 2012 for theses and evaluations purposes. Based on Diesing’s five archetypical rationalities we applied the deductive coding process to analyze data. To preserve anonymity, we limited our analysis to older interviews. At the time of our study, most of the interviewees were no longer in the same office. Their interview topics were mostly on politico-administrative decisions and reasoning, such as the introduction of one-line budgets in government (Helmuth, 2010), rationalities in politics and administration (Eicher & Schedler, 2012; Schedler & Schmucki, 2009),

accounting reforms at the national level in Switzerland (Demaj, 2017), and the role of key play-

ers in administrative reforms in Switzerland (Proeller & Siegel, 2004). Since our search aim was to identify different dimensions of rationality, we focused on the abstract classification of decisions, justifications, and interpretations into predefined categories. The central question was: Can these categories be justified in terms of content based on the data from the interviews?

We found that all five dimensions of rationality were represented in some form in these interviews, and that we could derive survey items from these statements. However, we also found that the reform champions among politicians and public administrators supplemented the five predetermined rationalities with another that seemed essential to them—the joy of improving things so that they were better. Consequently, we added a sixth dimension, labelled “creative” and defined it.

Creative dimension: The value in itself

The creative dimension concerns actions for one’s own sake, based on inner convictions (Forest, 2017). It is driven by the search for new solutions, creation and innovation while ignoring information about everything that already exists (Fischer et al., 2005). Procedurally, innovation is expressed through the non-rule-guide, playful experimentation and tinkering (Kim, 2019; Rickards, 1996).

Table 1: Secondary analysis of interviews – categories of interview partners

Roles of interviewees	
Members of the political executive (ministers)	9
Ministerial Members of Staff	5
Members of Parliament	9
Staff of Parliament Offices	7
Public Managers (line function)	25
Public Managers (staff function)	13
Total	68

Using the method of *thinking aloud* (Hauge et al., 2015; Phillips, 2014), we individually tested the resulting questionnaire with 18 participants who represented the archetypal dimensions of rationalities. Among the 18 participants, five had backgrounds in banking (economic), one was a freelance artist (creative), four were civil servants (political), four were in the medical-social field (social), two were lawyers (legal), and two were research and development employees (technical). Participants were asked to complete the survey and comment aloud on the comprehensibility of the questions. Additionally, plausible items were discussed in two subsequent focus group meetings with four consultants and five public managers working in Switzerland. The result was a questionnaire with 49 items, ready for a pretest.

The draft survey was based on a unipolar Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with 0 = not applicable. We did not use reverse-scored items (Hinkin, 1995). Furthermore, because the concept of rationality focuses on group processes, the survey items were personalized using “I,” “We” and “My team” and “My organization.”

Pre-testing phase one

Two rounds of quantitative tests were carried out step-by-step, in Germany. In the first round, data was collected from 584 students. The data were tested for discriminant power and reliability, normal distribution, construct validity, and factor analysis. Our results revealed that the social, legal, and creative dimensions were useful, whereas there was an overlap between political and economic dimensions. When the items relevant to these two dimensions were compared again, the reason for the overlap became clear. Some economic items aimed at fortune and consumption, were also interpreted as political power and influence. Items in the

technical dimension also had to be adjusted similarly based on the test results.

Pre-testing phase two

In the second round, the adapted version of the survey was used to gather data from 882 financial sector employees (banks, insurance companies, and state-building insurance companies). Among them, 40.5% were female and 59.5% were male. The majority (88%) worked in Switzerland, with the remainder working in neighboring countries. The analysis included the same tests and revealed a further need for adjustment, particularly in the distinction between the political and economic dimensions, whereas the technical dimension showed good values.

Final Validation

After slightly adjusting the items of the dimensions, we conducted a final validation survey with the items (see appendix 1). In July 2022, 526 people recruited via Prolific.com participated. The inclusion criteria were knowledge of German (since the questionnaire was in German) and not having participated in any of the pretests.

Table 2: Final validation – characteristics of participants

Characteristic	Percentage of Participants (n=526)
Gender	
Female	44.6
Male	55
Div.	0.4
Age	
0-20	7.7
21-30	52.2
31-40	21.7
41-50	10.6
51-60	4.5
61-80	4.8

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis

The structure of the instrument was checked using exploratory factor analysis. Oblimin with Kaiser’s principal component analysis (PCA) was performed with oblique rotation. The rotation converged after 15 iterations. This analysis indicated the presence of six components. A six-

component solution was chosen based on the six dimensions of rationality. A total of 18 items were excluded. The selected components had at least four strongly loaded items, which indicates

a solid factor according to Costello and Osborne (2005). This confirmed the possibility of six factors: legal, economic, political, technical, social, and creative dimensions.

Table 3: Factor Analysis

Items	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>jur3 [legal]</i>	0.764					
<i>jur1 [legal]</i>	0.746		0.248			
<i>jur2 [legal]</i>	0.673					
<i>jur9 [legal]</i>	0.643					
<i>jur6 [legal]</i>	0.635	-0.174			0.23	
<i>jur5 [legal]</i>	0.598		0.164	0.245		
<i>oek6 [economic]</i>		-0.774				
<i>oek4 [economic]</i>		-0.719			-0.154	
<i>oek9 [economic]</i>	-0.153	-0.659	0.236			
<i>oek2 [economic]</i>		-0.58	0.255	0.202		
<i>oek5 [economic]</i>		-0.554				
<i>pol4 [political]</i>			0.782			
<i>pol3 [political]</i>			0.748			
<i>pol6 [political]</i>		-0.269	0.604			
<i>pol2 [political]</i>		-0.172	0.567			
<i>tech3 [technical]</i>				0.721		
<i>tech8 [technical]</i>			-0.207	0.681		
<i>tech6 [technical]</i>				0.636		
<i>tech1 [technical]</i>				0.521		0.232
<i>soz4 [social]</i>	-0.201				0.812	
<i>soz3 [social]</i>			0.155		0.741	
<i>soz5 [social]</i>					0.738	
<i>soz2 [social]</i>					0.639	0.212
<i>soz6 [social]</i>	0.193	0.187			0.584	
<i>kre3 [creative]</i>				-0.218		0.805
<i>kre6 [creative]</i>						0.753
<i>kre4 [creative]</i>						0.651
<i>kre1 [creative]</i>					0.167	0.624
<i>kre8 [creative]</i>		0.191	0.201	0.177		0.624
<i>kre5 [creative]</i>				0.174		0.604
<i>kre2 [creative]</i>	-0.177	0.175	0.233	0.175		0.596

Construct validity

We tested construct validity—the extent to which the measured items corresponded to the construct they intended to measure—using Pearson correlation. All dimensions showed a significant correlation at 0.01 level (2-tailed) among at least three dimensions, and the technical and economic dimensions, among four

dimensions. Additionally, the correlations between the legal and political dimensions were significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed) among four dimensions.

The strongest correlation was seen between the creative dimension and the legal (-0.059) as well as the economic (-0.036) dimensions. Political and social dimension also demonstrated correlation (-0.004).

Table 4: Pearson correlation

		<i>LEG</i>	<i>CRE</i>	<i>POL</i>	<i>TEC</i>	<i>SOC</i>	<i>ECO</i>
<i>LEG</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.059	.358**	.369**	.105*	.306**
	N	485	484	483	484	484	483
<i>CRE</i>	Pearson Correlation	-0.059	1	.163**	.232**	.425**	-0.036
	N	484	484	482	484	484	482
<i>POL</i>	Pearson Correlation	.358**	.163**	1	.110*	-0.004	.473**
	N	483	482	483	482	482	481
<i>TEC</i>	Pearson Correlation	.369**	.232**	.110*	1	.258**	.205**
	N	484	484	482	484	484	482
<i>SOC</i>	Pearson Correlation	.105*	.425**	-0.004	.258**	1	-.155**
	N	484	484	482	484	484	482
<i>ECO</i>	Pearson Correlation	.306**	-0.036	.473**	.205**	-.155**	1
	N	483	482	481	482	482	483

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Post hoc analysis

To demonstrate that our rationality framework measures distinct constructs from existing models, we conducted a post hoc analysis using the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) as a benchmark (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). We selected the OCAI because of its established validity and clear categorization of organizational culture into four core dimensions that reflect broad organizational values without focusing on decision-making rationales (Heritage et al., 2014; Wudarczywski, 2018).

OCAI categorizes organizational culture into four dimensions: *collaborate* (emphasizing teamwork, loyalty, and mutual support), *create* (focusing on creativity, innovation, and risk-taking), *control* (oriented around rule-based processes and efficiency), and *compete* (valuing competitiveness, profitability, and achievement). These dimensions were measured using an ipsative scale that forced respondents to make tradeoffs, encouraging clear differentiation across dimensions (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Our analysis examined the extent to which these OCAI dimensions aligned with or diverged from our rationality framework dimensions. We wanted to verify if rationality constructs could offer unique perspectives on organizational behavior.

This study confirmed that the rationality dimensions (*legal*, *creative*, *political*, *technical*, *social*, and *economic*) measured offer unique insights beyond the OCAI's cultural dimensions. The use of discriminant validity analysis (see Appendix 2) enabled us to evaluate the

distinctiveness of the newly developed rationality framework. Discriminant validity aims to ensure that the rationality framework is not redundant with existing measures by demonstrating that its dimensions do not exhibit strong correlations with the theoretically distinct OCAI dimensions. By establishing discriminant validity, we validated the framework's unique contribution to understanding organizational rationality beyond the scope of cultural assessments.

While examining the correlation matrix between the OCAI and the rationality dimensions, we observed that the correlations were generally low to moderate, thereby supporting the discriminant validity of the rationality framework. For instance, *OI_create* was moderately correlated with the *creative* dimension in the rationality framework ($r = 0.543$), as expected, given that the conceptual alignment of both constructs was within the values of innovation and creativity. However, correlations with other theoretically distinct rationality dimensions were minimal; *OI_create* showed low correlations with *legal* ($r = 0.035$) and *economic* ($r = 0.027$) dimensions, demonstrating that these unrelated dimensions did not overlap, thus supporting the framework's construct independence. Similarly, *OI_collab*, which measures collaboration-oriented cultural attributes, correlated moderately with the *social* dimension ($r = 0.461$), but showed weak correlations with unrelated rationalities, such as *technical* ($r = 0.217$) and *political* ($r = 0.045$). These low correlations confirm that the *collaborate* dimension of the OCAI does not confound with rationality focused on

technical or political aspects, thus reinforcing the distinctiveness of each construct.

Further evidence of discriminant validity is seen in the analysis of *OI_compete*, which aligns with competitiveness and achievement-focused values in organizations. As anticipated, *OI_compete* is moderately correlated with *political* ($r = 0.379$) and *economic* ($r = 0.484$) rationality, both of which are conceptually similar because of their focus on performance and outcomes. However, the same dimension shows low or non-significant correlations with unrelated rationality such as *social* ($r = 0.05$) and *legal* ($r = 0.254$), supporting the theoretical distinction between these dimensions. Finally, *OI_control*, which is associated with rule adherence and stability, showed moderate correlations with *legal* ($r = 0.462$) and *technical* ($r = 0.370$) rationalities, consistent with their shared focus on structure and regulation. Nonetheless, correlations with unrelated dimensions such as *creative* ($r = 0.077$) and *social* ($r = 0.196$) remained low, providing further evidence that the control-oriented cultural construct is distinct from creative and social constructs.

Overall, the pattern of correlations between the rationality framework and the OCAI dimensions supports the discriminant validity of the rationality dimensions. Although some moderate correlations emerged between conceptually similar constructs (e.g., *creative* with *create*), the low correlations with unrelated dimensions affirm that the rationality framework captures unique aspects of organizational behavior that traditional cultural measures are unable to assess. These findings validate the utility of the rationality framework as a complementary tool for examining diverse organizational rationales and decision-making processes, extending beyond established cultural dimensions. Thus, the framework contributes to a more nuanced understanding of organizational behavior, offering insights that are theoretically and practically distinct from the value-driven focus of cultural assessments.

Discussion

This study aims to complement the existing qualitative research on organizational rationalities by developing a quantitative tool to measure these rationalities within communities of meaning. Building on prior theoretical frameworks (Cabantous et al., 2009; Diesing, 1962; Forest, 2017; Luhmann, 1995), our approach provides a structured means of capturing and analyzing

the multifaceted nature of rationalities in organizational settings (Cloutier & Langley, 2007). By translating these dimensions into measurable constructs, this study enhances our understanding of how diverse rationalities coexist, interact, and potentially conflict within organizations.

This study offers contributions in theory, methodology, and practice. *Methodologically*, this study introduced a novel survey instrument designed to identify and differentiate rationalities within communities of meaning. Our concept of rationality encompasses six distinct dimensions: social, technical, economic, legal, creative, and political. Our tool enables not only a qualitative exploration of these varied dimensions of rationality within organizations, but also facilitates their quantitative assessment, offering insights into both the proximity and divergence across these rationalities. Our findings validate each dimension as a critical axis for constructing a comprehensive model of rationality, thereby advancing the methodological toolkit available for examining rationality in organizational research.

Theoretically, this study makes a significant contribution by empirically validating and expanding the five dimensions of rationality initially proposed by Diesing (1962). While our findings support Diesing's dimensions—social, technical, economic, legal, and political—we also identified a sixth dimension, *creative*, which has recently gained increasing recognition in the scientific literature (Dubois, 2021; Kim, 2019; Klijn & Tomic, 2010). The creative dimension captures aspects of innovation, adaptability, and originality, reflecting the complex and dynamic needs of an organization (Ziebro & Northcraft, 2009). Our expanded six-dimensions model not only aligns with emerging theoretical perspectives, but also enhances our capacity to understand the diversity of rationalities shaping organizational life.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the theoretical discourse on the compatibility of rationality. Although models such as that of Besharov and Smith (2014) focus on the significance and compatibility of different logics, they remain largely conceptual and, to our knowledge, lack empirical testing. Our approach allows for an empirical assessment of compatibility through measures of distance and closeness between rationalities using multivariate methods. By making compatibility both observable and measurable, our study provides a concrete tool for advancing empirical research

on the interplay and integration of diverse logics within organizations, thereby bridging a gap in existing theoretical models.

To support *practice*, this study provides a questionnaire that can make organizational rationalities visible. This, in turn, reveals both commonalities and differences that can spark meaningful discussions and dialogue within organizations. Although our survey results did not deliver definitive answers, they highlighted critical areas that warrant reflection and discussion.

This potential has been affirmed in our use of the tool in training seminars, where participants utilized their own results as a springboard to question assumptions, reconsider habitual practices, and address organizational issues openly. For these seminars, we developed a simplified questionnaire with 4 items per dimension, this is 24 items in total. The questionnaire is published online at www.rationalities.ch and can be used with open access.

Moving forward, the ability to measure differences in rationality on a quantifiable scale offers valuable applications. It can support the formation of balanced teams, identify organizational blind spots, and proactively reveal and mitigate potential rationality-related conflicts. We anticipate that this survey will address a practical gap by providing organizations with a tool to conduct rationality analyses effectively, thus fostering a more reflective and adaptive organizational environment.

Limitations and future research

The primary limitations of this study were data and measurement issues as well as conceptual and methodological challenges. One key limitation of this study lies in the contextual variability of rationality and the reliance on Dienes's (1962) categories as the primary framework. While this approach is useful, rationality is a concept used across diverse contexts, with alternative definitions and frameworks emerging in areas such as family business (Seaman et al., 2014), fundraising in universities (Tannò, 2019), management accounting (ter Bogt & Scapens, 2011), and even criminal law (Savelsberg, 1988). The applicability of our framework may vary, and users must critically assess its suitability for their respective contexts.

Another limitation is the difficulty participants may have faced in answering the questionnaire. While developing our questionnaire, it became increasingly clear that two major distractions could potentially distort the results.

First, people can belong to different communities of meaning in organizations when they perform different tasks or functions (Grand et al., 2015). The head of a university hospital can simultaneously belong to multiple communities of meaning: the community of specialists they collaborate with, the community of hospital managers, and the community of university lecturers. These situationally different roles (Feldman, 1981) could distort the answers. Therefore, a clear framing of a single community of meaning is important. Second, particularly in the strong subcultures of an organization, there is a risk that respondents will describe a desirable rationality instead of the rationality that actually prevails. Even though the items are formulated in a fundamentally functionalist manner, the social dimension, for example, may elicit glossed-over answers if an individual has high social expectations from the team at work. However, regarding the risk of desirability bias, this questionnaire shares a common challenge with all approaches that analyze organizations or social groups through surveys (Holtgraves, 2004).

The survey we developed opens promising avenues for future research on the interrelationships between different forms of rationality. Key questions remain regarding how these rationalities interact: are certain dimensions inherently more compatible and can initial working hypotheses be formed based on observed patterns? We hypothesize that communities of meaning with balanced expression across all six dimensions may demonstrate greater adaptability and ease of collaboration, whereas those with strong one-dimensional orientations may face heightened communicative challenges when engaging with groups that differ in emphasis on rationality. This aligns with the findings of Pache and Santos (2013), who observed that entry-level workers in social services adapt more readily to new combinations of rationalities than their experienced counterparts. Similarly, the Besharov and Smith (2014) model predicts increased conflict when the compatibility of institutional logics is low. Future studies could build on these insights by further examining rationality compatibility using this survey tool, thereby enhancing our understanding of how diverse rationalities shape organizational dynamics and potential conflicts.

Appendix 1: Validated Survey Items (Original in German)

No	Dimension	In unserer Sinngemeinschaft ...	In our community of meaning ...
Jur1	Legal	... halten wir uns streng an formelle Benimmvorschriften	... we strictly adhere to formal rules
Jur2	Legal	... erwarten wir von einander, dass wir die internen Weisungen strikt einhalten	... we expect each person to strictly comply with internal directives.
Jur3	Legal	... halten wir uns an Vorschriften, die bestimmen, welches Verhalten zulässig ist	... we adhere to regulations that determine what behavior is permissible.
Jur5	Legal	... erwarten wir von jedem, dass er die formellen Regeln kennt	... we expect every member to know the formal rules
Jur6	Legal	... formulieren wir klare Regeln, um Konflikte zu vermeiden	... we define clear rules to avoid conflicts
Jur9	Legal	... ist eine vorgegebene Regel ein gutes Argument	... to follow the rules is a good argument.
Oek2	Economic	... ist es wichtig, mit unserem Handeln Gewinn zu erwirtschaften	... it is important to generate financial gains with our actions
Oek4	Economic	... hat alles seinen (monetären) Preis	... everything has its (monetary) price.
Oek5	Economic	... tun wir viele Dinge, weil wir dafür bezahlt werden	... we do many things because we get paid
Oek6	Economic	... sind Anreize wirksam, wenn sie mit Geldzahlungen verbunden sind	... incentives are effective when they involve monetary payments.
Oek9	Economic	... werden Handlungen als richtig erachtet, wenn sie einen Gewinn versprechen	... actions are considered right if they promise a profit.
Pol2	Political	... erwarten wir, dass andere mehr Einfluss haben wollen	... we expect others to want to have more influence.
Pol3	Political	... gilt Einfluss als wichtige Eigenschaft	... influence is considered an important characteristic.
Pol4	Political	... bemühen wir uns um einflussreiche Leute	... we strive to attract influential people.
Pol6	Political	... gelten Kollegen mit grosser macht als erfolgreich	... colleagues with great power are considered successful.
Tec1	Technical	... streben wir nach einer perfekten Lösung	... we strive for a perfect solution.
Tec3	Technical	... ist wichtig, dass Dinge ihre Funktion erfüllen	... it is important that things fulfill their purpose.
Tec6	Technical	... muss etwas, das nicht funktioniert, repariert werden	... something that doesn't work needs to be fixed.
Tec8	Technical	... entwickeln wir Lösungen so, dass sie ihren Zweck erfüllen	... we develop solutions so that they fulfill a given purpose.
Soz2	Social	... ist das Wohlbefinden anderer ein gutes Argument	... the well-being of others is a good argument.
Soz3	Social	... erwarten wir, dass sich Vorgesetzte auch um die persönlichen Anliegen der Mitarbeitenden kümmern	... we expect supervisors to also take care of employees' personal concerns.
Soz4	Social	... gehen wir auf individuelle Lebenssituationen der Mitarbeitenden ein	... we take into account the individual life situations of our employees.
Soz5	Social	... achten wir darauf, ob es anderen gut geht.	... we pay attention to whether others are well.
Soz6	Social	... pflegen wir eine menschenorientierte Führung	... we apply human-related leadership
Kre1	Creative	... werden ausgefallene Ideen gefördert	... unusual ideas are encouraged.
Kre2	Creative	... können wir an Neuem tüfteln	... we can tinker with new things
Kre3	Creative	... ist «out of the box» ein gutes Argument	... thinking «out of the box» is a good argument.
Kre4	Creative	... ist es erwünscht, neue Dinge auszuprobieren	... it is desired to try new things.
Kre5	Creative	... ist es ein Kompliment, originell zu sein	... it is a compliment to be original.
Kre6	Creative	... ist Kreativität ein gutes Argument	... is creativity a good argument
Kre8	Creative	... wird erwartet, dass wir Aufgaben kreativ lösen	... we are expected to solve tasks creatively

Appendix 2: Discriminant Analysis

	<i>Create</i>	<i>Collab</i>	<i>Compete</i>	<i>Control</i>	<i>LEG</i>	<i>CRE</i>	<i>POL</i>	<i>TECH</i>	<i>SOC</i>	<i>ECO</i>
Create	1	.612**	.441**	.209**	0.035	.543**	.153**	.211**	.357**	0.027
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		0	0	0	0.443	0	0.001	0	0	0.56
<i>N</i>	483	483	483	483	483	482	481	482	482	481
Collab	.612**	1	.134**	.367**	.147**	.365**	0.045	.217**	.461**	-0.056
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0		0.003	0	0.001	0	0.326	0	0	0.218
<i>N</i>	483	483	483	483	483	482	481	482	482	481
Compete	.441**	.134**	1	.397**	.254**	.217**	.379**	.250**	0.05	.484**
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0	0.003		0	0	0	0	0	0.271	0
<i>N</i>	483	483	483	483	483	482	481	482	482	481
Control	.209**	.367**	.397**	1	.462**	0.077	.133**	.370**	.196**	.193**
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0	0	0		0	0.091	0.003	0	0	0
<i>N</i>	483	483	483	483	483	482	481	482	482	481
LEG	0.035	.147**	.254**	.462**	1	-0.059	.358**	.369**	.105*	.306**
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0.443	0.001	0	0		0.197	0	0	0.021	0
<i>N</i>	483	483	483	483	485	484	483	484	484	483
CRE	.543**	.365**	.217**	0.077	-0.059	1	.163**	.232**	.425**	-0.036
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0	0	0	0.091	0.197		0	0	0	0.437
<i>N</i>	482	482	482	482	484	484	482	484	484	482
POL	.153**	0.045	.379**	.133**	.358**	.163**	1	.110*	-0.004	.473**
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0.001	0.326	0	0.003	0	0		0.015	0.932	0
<i>N</i>	481	481	481	481	483	482	483	482	482	481
TECH	.211**	.217**	.250**	.370**	.369**	.232**	.110*	1	.258**	.205**
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.015		0	0
<i>N</i>	482	482	482	482	484	484	482	484	484	482
SOC	.357**	.461**	0.05	.196**	.105*	.425**	-0.004	.258**	1	-.155**
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0	0	0.271	0	0.021	0	0.932	0		0.001
<i>N</i>	482	482	482	482	484	484	482	484	484	482
ECO	0.027	-0.056	.484**	.193**	.306**	-0.036	.473**	.205**	-.155**	1
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0.56	0.218	0	0	0	0.437	0	0	0.001	
<i>N</i>	481	481	481	481	483	482	481	482	482	483

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