What are the factors that shape university research management within small contexts?

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Objectives

General objectives:

EXPLORATORY: instigate a discussion

COMPARATIVE: compare structures, challenges and strategies

Specific objective:

to identify factors that shape research management within three universities

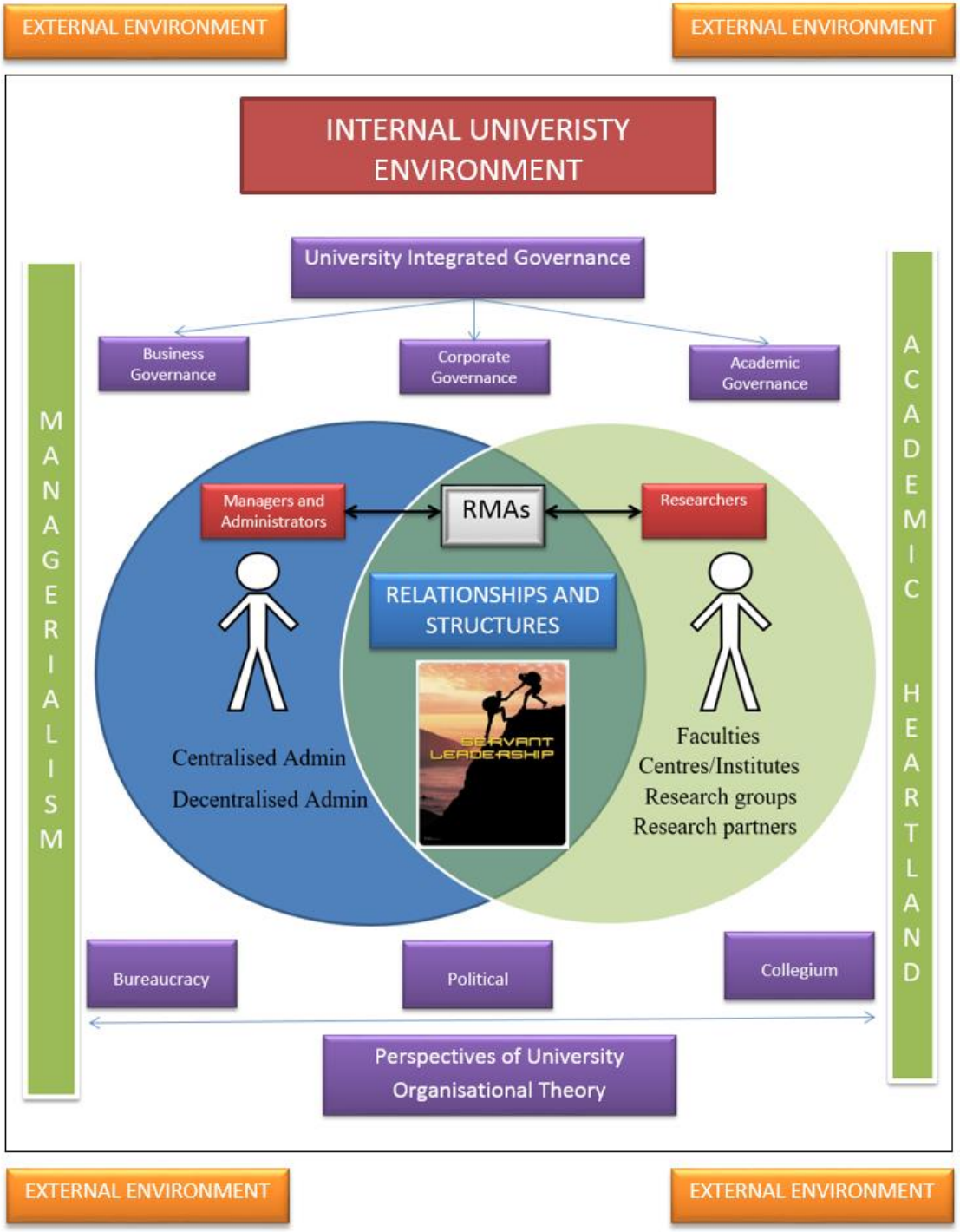
Conceptual Framework

3 Pillars:

(a) Context

(b) Relationships

(c) Structures



Research Questions

Overall Question:

What are the factors that shape research management in national, universities in three European small island states?

3 Research Questions:

RQ1: *How is the research management function organised?*

RQ2: *What are the key challenges in managing research?*

RQ3: *What strategies do these universities have in place to address the research management challenges?*

Factors shaping university research management

Category	Factors shaping university research management
1. Factors relating to the external context	Embededness of research in the minds of people
	Status of a national, publicly funded, flagship university
	Research funding
2. University internal factors	University strategies and performance evaluation
	Research support structures
3. Research management and RMA-related factors	Trust building
	RMAs and the research management profession
4. Resilience factors	Elements of resilience

1. Factors relating to the external context

Embeddedness of research in the people's mindset

- Historical development and tradition
- Geographical location
- Attitudes and perceptions

1. Factors relating to the external context

Status of the university

- Call for transparency and public scrutiny
- Balance between university missions
- Cosiness, comfort, personal grudges

1. Factors relating to the external context

Research funding

- a major limiting factor
- Benefits: access to wider networks; reputation; essential source of funding
- Risks: strings attached; competitive; not guaranteed; bureaucratic; externally-driven

2. Factors relating to the internal context

University strategies and performance evaluation

- Formality
- Selectivity
- Proactiveness/Reactiveness

2. Factors relating to the internal context

Research Support Structures (RSS)

- Can shape and be shaped by research mgt
- Direct implications: e.g. rational/relational
- Indirect implications: e.g. availability of resources specific events; understand the need for RSS

3. Research management and RMA-related factors

Nature of the job and recognition

- Need for experience
- Extent of investment in training
- Recognition and perception

3. Research management and RMA-related factors

Trust building

- RMAs & researchers speaking the same language
- Origination (academic end vs. admin end)
- Servant leadership

4. Resilience factors

University resilience

- Policies and procedures
- Brain circulation
- Collaboration + benchmarking with strong partners

4. Resilience factors

RMA resilience

- Extent of ‘fit’ with the organisation + group
- Self-regulation
- Institutional intervention

Implications for universities

- Context moulds national universities uniquely
- Structures develop according to the path of each university
- The role of RSS in building trust between RMAs & researchers
- Universities' role in the development of RMAs

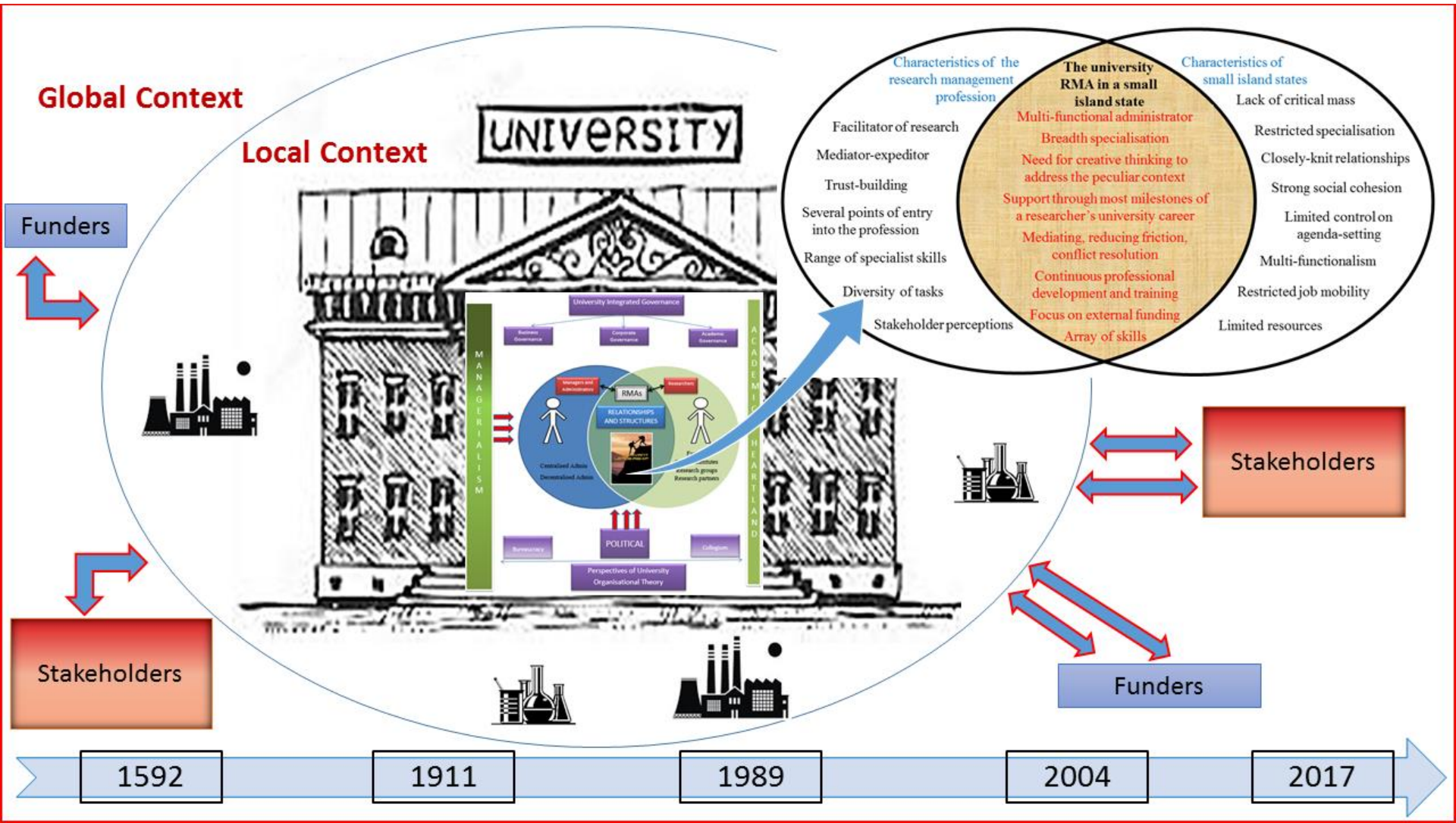
Implications for RMAs

- Contextual adaptation – a specific profile
- Creativity to do more with less
- RMAs can be present all along a researcher's career
- RMAs engaging in Research Management Profession

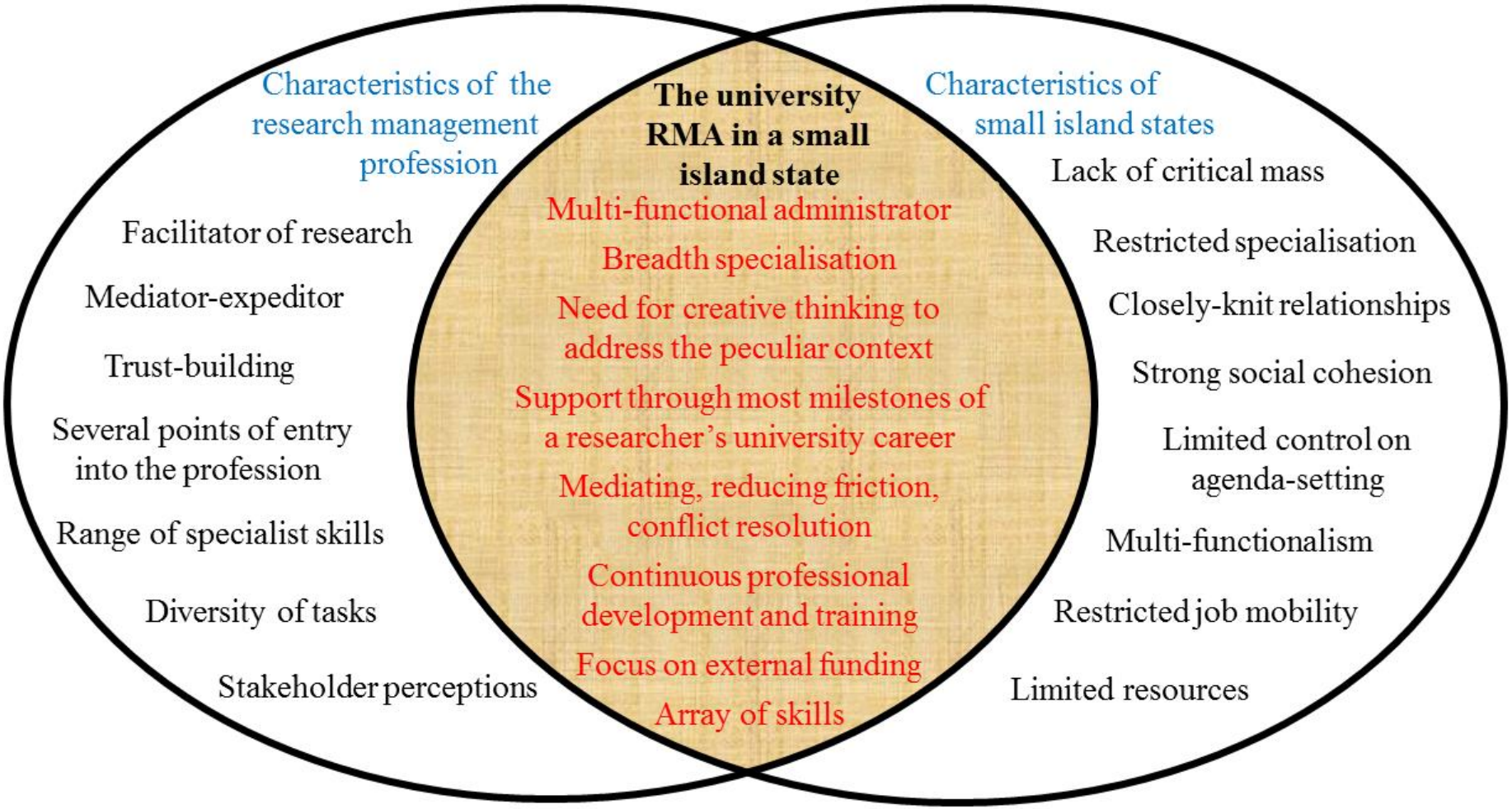
Implications for the Profession

- Tailoring academic preparation for contextual realities
- Profession reaching out to RMAs
- Transferability of knowledge is not automatic to small contexts

Re-assessment



Contextual shaping of university RMAs



Conclusions

- Context plays a determinant role in the way behaviours are moulded
- Research management built in small steps
- Knowledge from one context cannot be transferred blindly on to other context without understanding the idiosyncratic characteristics