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Institutional Entrepreneurship in the Portuguese NHS

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on critical realism and institutional entrepreneurship literature this study seeks to explain how the Portuguese Ministry of Health was able to move from a dominant public administration logic to a managerial logic in the 2000s. For this purpose a non-conflating model for studying divergent institutional change in mature and highly institutionalised fields is proposed. An in-depth and longitudinal case study was adopted as the research method to carry out the investigation since the researchers were interested in placing the management changes they observed in Portuguese public hospitals within their social, economic and organisational context, in order to fully understand their role and impact. We demonstrate how without disembedding from extant structures the Portuguese Ministry of Health sought for alternative logics, when experiencing tensions and contradictions in the field, and skilfully used several management accounting technologies to frame new institutions that supported the new logic mobilised for the field.

Keywords: institutional entrepreneurship, institutional logics, critical realism, mature fields, Health care