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EVOLUTION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Models, challenges and possible directions



Chambers of Commerce
International Research Group



WHY BOTHER?

*If business doesn't have a voice,
it doesn't have a future.*

*Chambers are logical channels
for that voice.(...)*

*We need to distill the best of the past
and take it forward.*

Ch. Mead, Voices from the Past..., s.20



PRESENTATION PLAN

1. Research **summary** gap
2. Models of chambers of commerce
3. Evolution needed

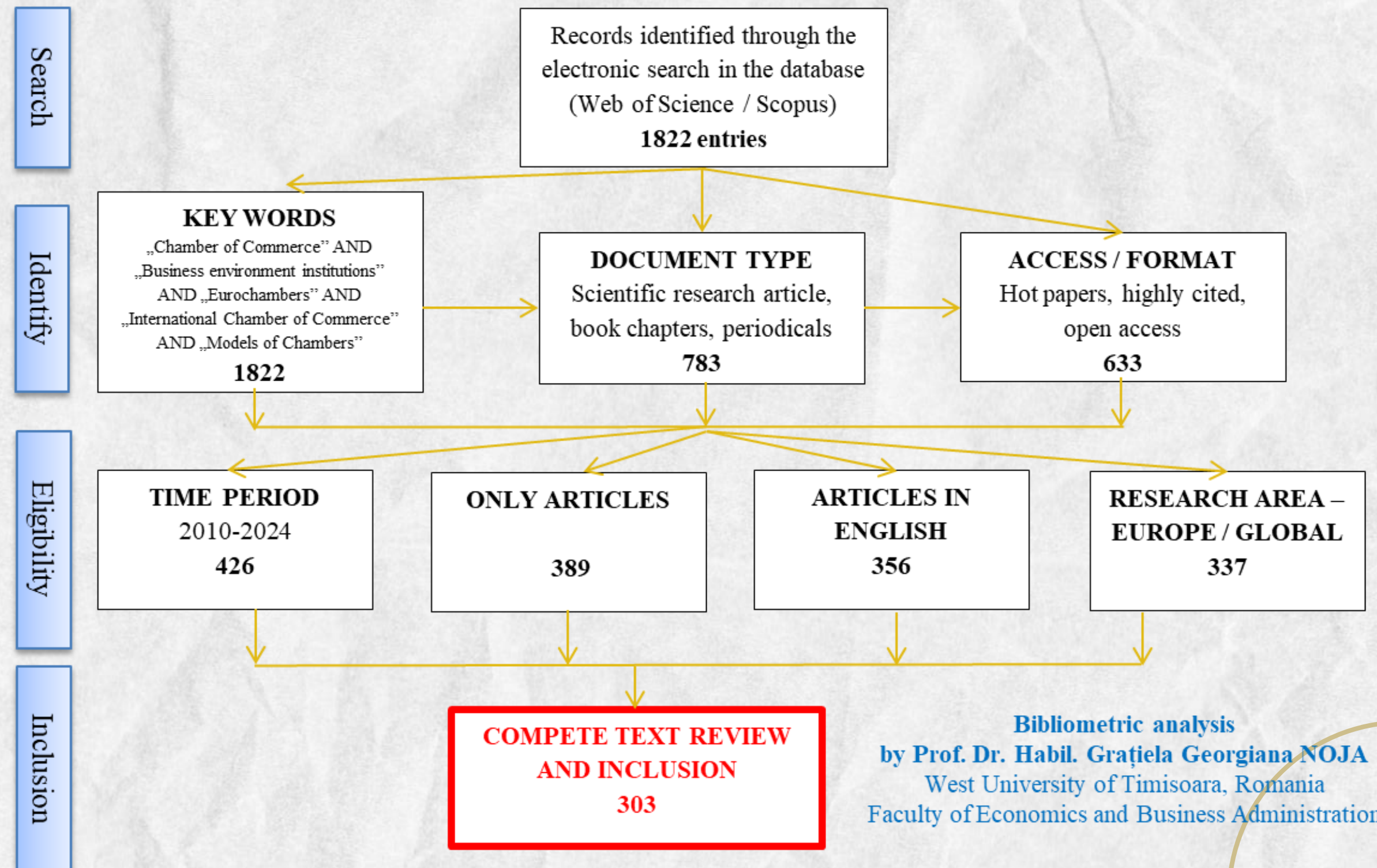


RESEARCH GAP

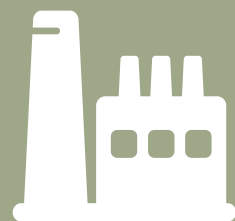


Chambers of Commerce - 3rd International Conference, November 14 – 15, 2024, Warsaw, Poland

- Publications are rare → → →
- No cooperation btw chambers and researchers
- Ref. to standard models
- Ref. by the way



ECOSYSTEM

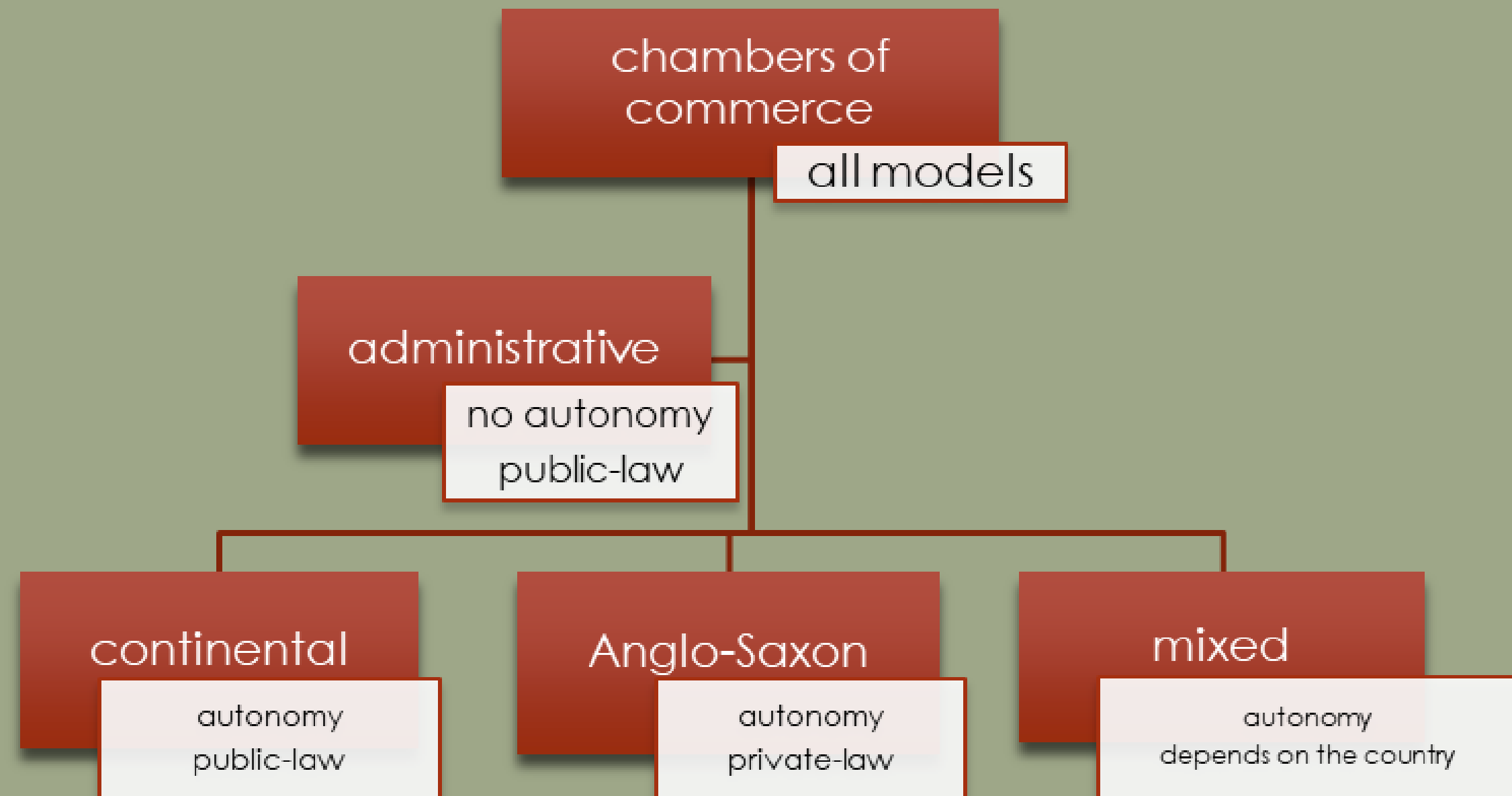


Chambers of commerce can be found in **most countries** around the world.

- There are strong, **public-law organizations**, providing selected **public services** with **obligatory membership** of all companies.
- There are **private-law, voluntary associations** with 50–300 members.
- Some operate exclusively **in a region**, others are **factory specific** and operate **nationwide**.
- Some of them are regulated by **dedicated regulations**, but there are also countries **without any regulations** regarding chambers.
- **Their social and political position is various.**
- There are also institutions named chambers of commerce but they are controlled by the government.

This classical taxonomy is too general given the diversity of national implementations.

MODELS





Anglo-Saxon

It is a very rich ecosystem. These chambers are characterized by **voluntary membership**, but depending on the country they are **established** either **by a legal act** (e.g. in the Baltic States) **or by the initiative of interested entrepreneurs** (the dominant model). In the second case, a very large number of different organizations can function side by side, although **in some countries** (e.g. Canada, Japan) there are regulations indicating **the principle of one regional chamber per defined area** (city, province, etc). Same may work without regulations (Belgium).

A few examples: **515 in Japan, 446 in Poland, 600–700 in United Kingdom, 7000 in United States. Membership rate** in this model is usually low – **1–2% of companies** with rare exceptions. Typical private-law chamber is usually small – it unites several hundred firms.

In most of the countries there is a **national chamber of commerce** which **usually unites just a part of local chambers** voluntary or **by accreditation programme**: 174 in US, 51 in UK, 13 in Belgium.



Anglo-Saxon

Short description:

- They **represent** and address first **intrests of own members**.
- They have **limited resources**.
- They can be **local/regional or industry-specific**.
- In some countries companies involved in international trade must became members of such chamber.
- **National chamber of commerce is not an obligatory umbrella organisation for local chambers** but usually provides some usefull information, contacts, HOWTO and **important services, like: issuing certificates of origin, transport and export permits**.

Choosing the right private law chamber requires an analysis of their potential and depends on the nature of the investment (e.g. local or industry-specific).

Continental

They are **set by public-law act, big regional, obligatory organisations for all companies** in a country. They usually have a strong position, are representative of the market and offer a range of services for business – **many of them aim at supporting foreign trade and supporting investors.**

Strong examples:

1. **Austrian WKO + 9 regional and AUSSENWIRTSCHAFT AUSTRIA** (or ADVANTAGE AUSTRIA).
2. **One Netherlands Chamber of Commerce KVK (16 offices).** It is a public service provider which manages the Dutch Business Register (Handelsregister), provides information, advice and support to companies, promotes regional economic development and networking.
3. **Germany DIHK and 79 IHK in 16 Lands.**





Continental

Short description:

- Usually **each company is a member of the appropriate chamber by law.**
- Therefore – **chambers represent all the companies.**
- They are **public institutions** that usually **provide selected public services**, including **administrative ones (both authoritative and non-authoritative).**
- Public funds (donations, share in corporate taxes or VAT) are important part of their budgets.
- They are **organized regionally in continental model.**
- **National chamber of commerce is the obligatory umbrella organisation for regional chambers.**

But not all of them are effective hubs. Some face structural problems and lack of support from companies – e.g. Spain, Hungary (mandatory membership has been withdrawn) and even France (w their tasks are increasingly being taken over by the state, and the chambers themselves are in crisis).

MIXED

In the classical taxonomy this is a very wide group of all the chambers that do not meet the criteria of the Continental or Anglo-Saxon model.

This is a highly diverse group that requires further division.



SECTORAL



Short description:

- They are **public-law** chambers of commerce organized vertically by sectors or group of sectors of economy (up to the size of the country). **Hubs of expert competences.**
- Each company is a member of the appropriate chamber by law. Balanced membership of all enterprise class sizes.
- Therefore – chambers represent all the companies.
- They provide selected public services, including administrative ones (both authoritative and non-authoritative).
- Public funds (donations, share in corporate taxes or VAT) are important part of their budgets.
- National chamber of commerce is the obligatory umbrella organisation for regional chambers.

Examples: chambers of agriculture, separate chambers dedicated to trade, industry, crafts, insurance, etc.



EVOLUTION NEEDED



Chambers of commerce play an extremely important role in the economic ecosystem. They **support entrepreneurs**. They **represent business** in dialogue with state institutions. In some countries, they also **deliver public services**, including administrative tasks of an authoritative nature.

- Past -



However, **the world economy is changing dynamically. With it the needs of all its actors.**

These processes require that the chambers undergo an equally appropriate evolution.
Development of new services and establishment of new forms of cooperation.

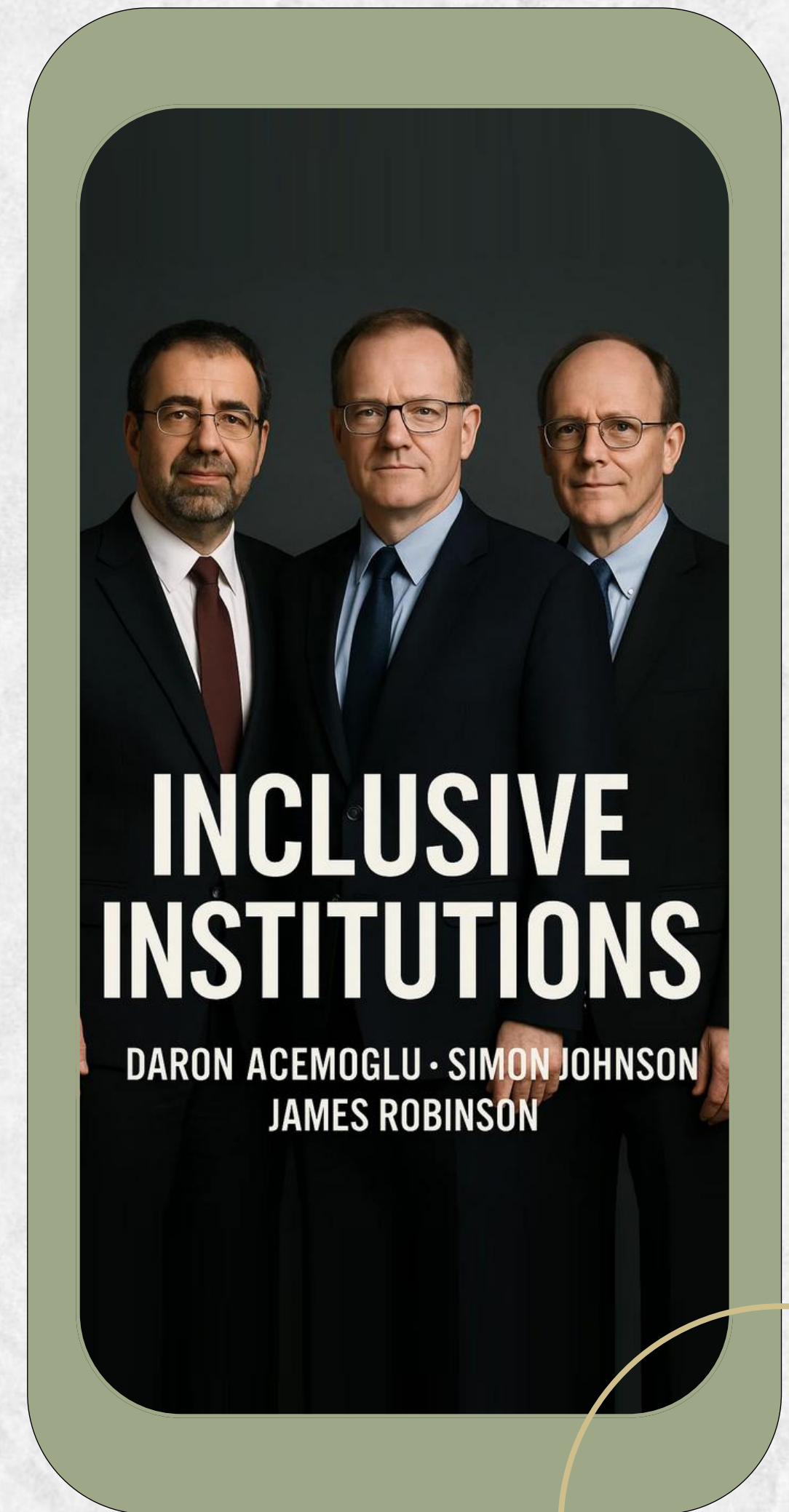
- Future -

INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS

Chambers of commerce **ARE inclusive institutions.** But today they are mostly focused on selected topics – like:

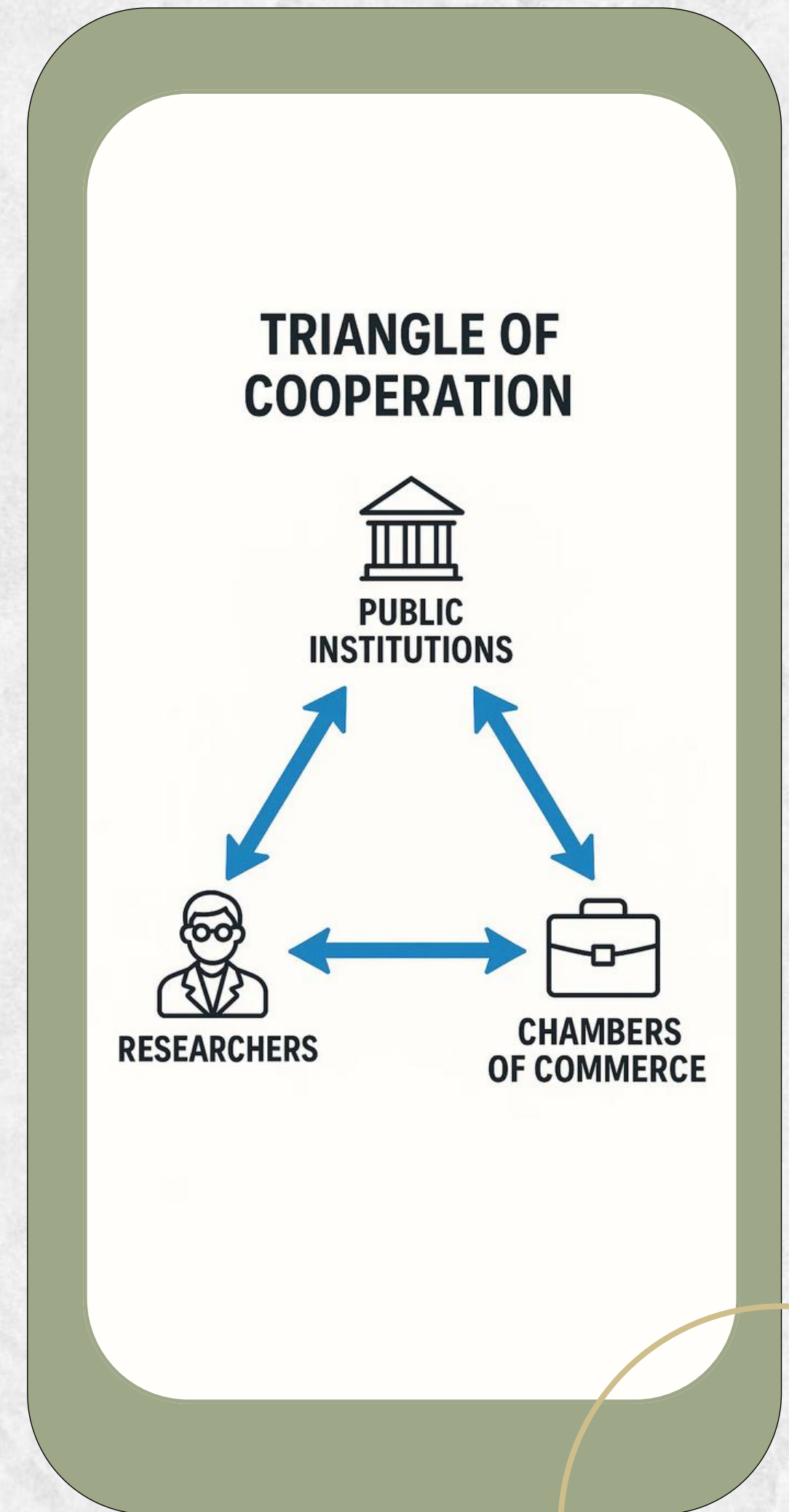
- promotion of international trade,
- delivering limited public services,
- education, trainings, conferences,
- general advice.

Many **focus on large firms.** How can they **support SMEs more effectively?**



COOPERATION

- External reviews of chambers.
- Business needs analysis.
- Comparative publications.
- Suggestions for new services.
- Think tanks, preparation of opinions.
- Designing evolutionary or model changes.



ABOUT US

International group of researchers focused on chambers of commerce and other business environment organizations.

Members include lawyers, economists, political scientists, sociologists, historians, geographers & representatives of chambers





THANK YOU

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