

Foreword

Today, individuals worldwide have the power of factories and organizations at their fingertips. IT enables us to produce new goods and services as well as organize others without even leaving our desk. In the past, this power was in the hands of many well-organized (and often well-educated) men and women, mostly in hierarchical organizations emphasizing physical presence. Nowadays, virtual organizations have partly removed the necessity of physical presence. The shift was induced by the diffusion of networked technology throughout organizations, but did not change the way organizations worked as such.

The idea that organizations benefit from openness in terms of accepting change, but also in terms of integrating outsiders, has led to an important shift in thinking about organizing and about the way people act within organizations. The nature of distributed organizing, thus, promises to remove the dominant position of markets and hierarchies in the creation of value. The trend towards distributed organizing is driven by the integration of communities into value creation. Rethinking the ways and means of organizing is - in the light of networked technologies - at the core of it.

In a world where individuals are able to perform almost all processes that traditionally were reserved for organizations, these organizations might become less important than the individuals that act within them. Given this fundamental shift, the nature of distributed organizing is an exciting and radical attempt to rethink the organization in such a world of networked production. The rate of change that organizations are confronted with and the heterogeneity of needs that they address with their products or services are growing exponentially. Organizations are more and more forced to find answers in a world, which is characterized by ever increasing complexity.

“On the Nature of Distributed Organizing” combines the two perspectives on organizing and information technology in a unique manner. On the one hand, it offers deep theoretical insight into the processes of organizing for future organizations and distributed value creation of individuals. On the other hand, it offers applicable technical know-how for the design of information systems to support distributed organizing. The work appeals by the fresh approach by which the concepts are developed and presented. It has been accepted as a doctoral dissertation in 2013 by the School of Business and Economics at the Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nürnberg. The book deserves broad dissemination both in the research community and

in management practice. It is especially recommended to those with a deep interest in organizational design and the true nature of organizing. In short, I think executives should have this book under control. Executive students of my lectures will.

Prof. Dr. Kathrin M. Möslin

Preface

What does “being organized” mean in a networked world? Is it characterized by strict ideas of order or is it rather the capacity to find immediate answers to complexity time and again? The following thesis answers this question relatively free from complexity with the latter. It could not have done so freely without the help of many devoted individuals.

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. Kathrin M. Möslin who has proven to be endless source of motivation and constructive feedback. Without the necessary trust offered by her, a book like this would not have been created. In addition, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Freimut Bodendorf who took over secondary supervision of my thesis.

Second, I would like to thank my colleagues. Especially, PD Dr. Anne-Katrin Neyer has contributed a lot to the development of the thoughts contained in here. Thanks for putting up with this! Prof. Dr. Vivek Velamuri has managed to be a constructive nuisance, picking on every single instance of inconsistency and being a good friend. We don’t know what would have happened if every discussion had happened face-to-face. Dr. Jörg Haller, Dr. Bastian Bansemir, and Hari Suman Naik are to thank for being very good colleagues and friends.

Third, I would like to thank my family: Ingrid and Peter, Richard and Nanny, Erna and Hildegard, Ernst and Käthe. Thank you for being there and raising me. It’s sad that not all of you will still have a chance to read this. Thank you, Patrik, for growing up with me.

Fourth, words are not enough to thank my girlfriend, Sabrina Adamczyk, who has always had faith in me and was a constant role model both in professional and private matters. It’s not disorganization, it’s complexity. I love you.

At last, dear reader, you may enjoy reading now.

Dominik Böhler



<http://www.springer.com/978-3-658-06122-7>

On the Nature of Distributed Organizing

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2014, XVIII, 253 p. 66 illus., Softcover

ISBN: 978-3-658-06122-7