Contents

1 Introducing Organizations as Social Systems Conducting Experiments ......................................................... 1
  1.1 Introduction ............................................................................ 1
  1.2 Making Sense of Organizations: From “Phenomena” to “Key Features” ........ 1
     1.2.1 Situation 1: Strategy Formulation ........................................ 2
     1.2.2 Situation 2: A Worker in Trouble ........................................ 4
     1.2.3 The First “Arche”: The Experimental Character of Organizations ....... 6
     1.2.4 The Second “Arche”: The Social Systemic Character of Organizations ................................................................. 6
     1.2.5 The Relation Between the Social Systemic and the Experimental Character of Organizations ...................................................... 7
  1.3 Organizations as Social Systems Conducting Experiments ................................................................. 8
     1.3.1 Conducting Experiments ...................................................... 9
     1.3.2 Organizations as Social Systems ............................................ 17
  1.4 Principles Improving Organizational Design .................................................. 20
     1.4.1 Functional Design Principles ................................................. 21
     1.4.2 Specific Design Principles .................................................... 22
  1.5 Conceptual Background ...................................................................... 23
  1.6 Outline of the Book ........................................................................ 25
     1.6.1 Part I: The Experimental and Social Arche of Organizations .......... 25
     1.6.2 Part II: Designing Organizations as Social Systems Conducting Experiments .............................................................. 27
     1.6.3 Part III: Poor and Rich Survival .............................................. 28
  References ............................................................................... 29

Part I The Experimental and Social Arche of Organizations

2 The Experimental Arche: Ashby’s Cybernetics .............................................. 33
  2.1 Introduction ............................................................................ 33
  2.2 Cybernetics: Effective Methods for the Study of Complex Systems ........ 34
     2.2.1 Describing Behavior: “Systems” and “Transformations” .............. 35
     2.2.2 Regular Behavior and Input .................................................... 38
     2.2.3 A procedure to Describe Behavior and Identify Regularity .............. 40
  2.3 Cybernetics: Effective Methods for the Control of Complex Systems ......... 46
     2.3.1 Ashby’s Views on Regulation: Definition, Types of Regulation and Requisite Variety ................................................................. 46
     2.3.2 Control, Design and Operational Regulation .................................. 54
     2.3.3 Adaptive Behavior ............................................................. 65
2.4 Organizations as Systems Conducting Experiments
References

3 The Experimental Arche Continued: Von Foerster on Observing Systems
3.1 Introduction
3.2 Two problems in first-order cybernetics
3.2.1 The problem of selection
3.2.2 The problem of defining the transformation
3.2.3 Dealing with Both Problems: The Cybernetics of Observing
3.3 Observers as Closed Systems Producing Eigenvalues
3.3.1 Closed Systems and Their Eigenvalues
3.3.2 Closure, cognition and observing
3.3.3 Problems of First-order Cybernetics Revisited
3.4 Von Foerster and the Risky Nature of the Organizational Experiment
3.4.1 A Common Sense Understanding of Risk
3.4.2 A More Fundamental Understanding of Risk
3.4.3 Two Consequences of von Foerster’s View on Risk
References

4 The Second “arche,” Organizations as Social Systems: Luhmann
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Luhmann’s General Theory of Social Systems
4.2.1 Autopoietic or Self-Producing Systems
4.2.2 Meaning Processing Systems
4.2.3 Social Systems
4.3 The Social “arche”: Organizations as a Particular type of Social Systems
4.3.1 Elements of Organizations: Decisions
4.3.2 The Organization’s Structure: Decision Premises
4.3.3 Processes of Self-Production: The Autopoiesis of Organizations
4.3.4 Questions Concerning Luhmann’s Theory of Organizations
4.4 Organizations as social systems reflecting complexity
References

5 Epilogue to Part I: The Two “Archa” Combined
5.1 Introduction
5.2 Cybernetics and Social Systems Theory; an Exploratory Comparison
5.2.1 The Goal and Core Concepts of Respectively Cybernetics and Social Systems Theory
5.2.2 Cybernetics and Social Systems Theory Compared
5.3 Combining the Experimental and the Social “Arche”
5.4 Transition to Part II: Designing organizations
References

Part II Designing Organizations as Social Systems Conducting Experiments
6 Beer: Functional Design Principles for Viable Infrastructures
6.1 Introduction
6.2 Viability and Complexity
9.3 A Cybernetic and Social Systemic Generalization of the Disciplines .......... 299
  9.3.1 Cybernetic Analysis of the Disciplines ........................................ 300
  9.3.2 A Social Systemic Analysis of the Disciplines .............................. 305
  9.3.3 Cybernetic and Social Systemic Principles Underpinning Discipline
      in Organizations .............................................................. 308
9.4 Why are the Disciplines Disquieting? .............................................. 309
  9.4.1 Trivialization ................................................................. 310
  9.4.2 Self-Trivialization ............................................................ 311
  9.4.3 Fear as a Prime Motivational Factor ......................................... 311
  9.4.4 A Science of Discipline ....................................................... 312
  9.4.5 Detachment and Lack of Involvement ....................................... 312
  9.4.6 Contingent and Minimal Goals .............................................. 313
References .............................................................................. 315

10 Towards Rich Survival: Aristotle .............................................. 317
  10.1 Introduction ........................................................................ 317
  10.2 The Highest Good for Man: Basic Distinctions ................................ 320
      10.2.1 The Highest Good for Man: Living a Fulfilled Life ....................... 320
      10.2.2 Characteristically Human Capacities and the Fulfilled Life .......... 322
  10.2.3 Virtues Involved in Eudaimonia ........................................... 324
  10.3 Eupraxia: Moral Virtue, Practical Wisdom, and Choice .................... 327
      10.3.1 Moral Virtue ................................................................... 328
      10.3.2 Practical Wisdom .......................................................... 331
  10.4 Aristotle Versus the Disciplines ................................................... 348
References .............................................................................. 349

11 Organizational Structures Supporting Rich Survival ..................... 351
  11.1 Introduction ........................................................................ 351
  11.2 Incorporating the Organization into Society .................................... 351
  11.3 Rich Survival: Specific Design Principles and Corresponding Structures ........ 357
      11.3.1 Requirements to and Design Principles for “Rich” Organizational Structures ........................................... 357
      11.3.2 Production and Control Structures Fitting the Design Principles .... 370
  11.4 Organizations and Rich Meaningful Survival ..................................... 375
References .............................................................................. 378

12 Epilogue ............................................................................... 379
  12.1 Introduction ........................................................................ 379
  12.3 Rich Survival: Its Applicability to Organizations and Relation
      to Poor Survival ................................................................... 381
  12.4 Things to do ........................................................................ 384
References .............................................................................. 385

Index .......................................................................................... 387