

ORGANIZATION OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS.

The significance of partial organization

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Abstract

In organizational research it is common to restrict the concept of organization to denote formal organizations, while the world outside such entities are described by other concepts such as institutions or networks. In this paper it is argued that it is fruitful to broaden the concept of organization to include some aspects of the order that exists outside and among organizations. A broader concept includes not only complete, formal organization but also "partial organization". Both kinds of organization are based on decisions, but while complete organizations have access to all elements of organization, partial organization is based on only one or a few of these. Like complete organization partial organization is a common phenomenon not least characterizing much of contemporary global order. The authors discuss how partial organization arises, how and why institutions and networks sometimes become organized, and the consequences of organization for change, transparency and accountability.

Keywords: decision; globalisation; institution; network.

Is organization becoming obsolete? In the literature dealing with topics such as governance and globalization there is much talk about networks and institutions but much less about organization. In the emerging knowledge society companies are said to require a network form rather than being traditional organizations (Powell 1990, Castells 1996). Students of organization increasingly emphasize the role of institutions rather than organization (Greenwood et al 2008). Several authors trying to describe modern society at large do without a concept of organization (e.g. Bourdieu 1990, Giddens 1990, Habermas 1981). It may appear as if organization, often associated with bureaucracy and hierarchy, is a phenomenon of the past and that the future lies in new forms of interaction. In contrast to these developments we believe that the concept of organization is highly useful for analyzing contemporary society. But organization must then be defined somewhat broader than has been usual in organization theory the last fifty years. In this paper we suggest such a concept and argue that it is useful for understanding phenomena that are often described as networks and institutions.

1. From organizations to organization

Within organizational theory, the distinction between organization and environment has been a fundamental one. Organization and environment have been described as different orders; the environment is not an organized order. Admittedly, one can argue that a significant part of the environment of organizations consists of other organizations (Perrow 1991), but these are not mutually assumed to be organized. Instead, the order existing outside and between organizations has been designated with other concepts such as market (e.g. Håkansson and Johansson 1993), as network (e.g. Thompson 2003) or institution (e.g. Scott and Meyer 1994). Organization seems to have occurred within formal organizations only.

With such a perspective theories of organization have been connected to the legal form of formal organization and applied mainly to the study of such entities, that is of organizations in the plural, not organization. Several classic studies, as well as

well-known textbooks in the subject, have the term organizations in their title (March and Simon 1958; Scott 1995; Perrow 1986).

In this paper, we make another distinction, the one between organization and other forms of order, between the organized and the non-organized. We see organization as a special form of social order. We define organization as active, decided upon attempts to achieve special orders that differ from already existing ones, for example those that are determined by networks or institutions. Such a definition abolishes the distinction between organization and environment. It entails, in this respect, a broader definition than the traditional one. We can find organization not only within but also outside and between formal organizations. However, in order to see that, we have to define organization so that it does not only encompass “complete” formal organizations but also various forms of what we call *partial organization*.

There can be elements of partial and even complete organization in social situations that by some scholars are broadly described as networks or institutions. We argue that the concepts of network and institution are often used in such a broad sense that they risk conceal important elements of organization in contemporary society.

The broad use of the concept of network has led to a linguistic chaos (Borgatti and Forster 2003, Thompson 2003). Almost any interaction among organizations seems to be possible to describe as a network. The concept of institution has been used for phenomena that are far from taken for granted and even for formal organizations or parts thereof, in formulations such as the EU institutions or state institutions (meaning courts, commissions, state departments etc). The tendency to use the concepts of network and institution in such a broad sense explains why the concepts are common and why there is comparatively little room for the concept of organization. But most importantly, the tendency obstructs us from noticing all elements of organization that exist outside formal organizations and in the interaction among such organizations.

In the paper we use the concept of network in its original meaning as fundamentally different from both organization and market (Granovetter 1985) and institution as different from and in some respects opposite to organization (Meyer and Rowan 1977, Jepperson 1991). With a relatively precise definition, a network consists of personal and informal relations that may vary in emotional intensity and intimacy (Granovetter 1973) and it is kept together through reciprocity, trust and social capital (Borgatti and Foster 2003, Podolny and Page 1998). An institution can be defined as a stable, routine-reproduced pattern of behavior, combined with norms and conceptions that are taken for granted by a larger or smaller group of people, such as handshakes and birthday celebrations (Berger and Luckmann 1966, Jepperson 1991).

By upholding the conceptual difference between the concepts of organization, network and institution and allowing for a concept of partial organization it is possible to see the phenomena they stand for as alternative forms of order with different characteristics, causes and consequences. Such a differentiation also makes it possible to understand the complex interplay and relations between these forms and to analyze how one of the forms is sometimes transformed into the other.

In the next section we argue that several of the characteristics that are generally ascribed to formal organizations also occur outside them. We describe various kinds of partial organization - organization that does not involve the use of all elements of organization. In section 3 we point to some fundamental characteristics of both partial and complete organization that make these forms differ from networks and institutions.

The relevance of a concept is determined by its usefulness. We illustrate the usefulness of our concept of organization by applying it in three contexts. In section 4 we apply the concept to examples from the global scene arguing that much of contemporary global order consists of partial organization. In section 5 we use the concept of partial organization to discuss processes towards more or less organization and what factors may change the degree of organization. Finally, in

section 6 we discuss causes and consequences of networks and institutions becoming organized. At the end of the paper we draw some conclusions for organization theory of the concept of partial organization.

2. Complete and partial organization

We define organization as an actively decided order; decision is a fundamental aspect of organization (March and Simon 1958, Luhmann 2000). Decisions are statements representing conscious choices of how people shall act or what distinctions, identities and classifications they shall make. For example, in formal organizations decisions are used for allocating specific tasks to members and for giving them identities in the form of titles with different status, while decisions within accounting systems classify resources.

Also, organizations have access to a number of instruments for creating order, of which we would like to emphasise five: membership, hierarchy, rules, monitoring and sanctions. These organizational elements jointly constitute formal organizations – they are a part of the institution of Organization. They are to be found in laws, in textbook definitions or otherwise widely spread conceptions of formal organizations. All these elements are objects for decision – they can be decided to have a different design in different organizations at different times – but a formal organization cannot decide to abstain from an element altogether: If we are to make people believe that something is an organization or a “true” organization (Brunsson 2006), then we have to show them that it has access to all these elements.

As observed in the literature on formal organizations, the utilization of all these organizational elements has the further effect of facilitating coordination, sometimes allowing a far-reaching division of labour and collective goal-oriented behaviour (Etzioni 196). The elements also help concentrating power (Clegg, Courpasson and Nelson 2006)

Organizations decide about *membership*, about who will be allowed to join the organization (Ahrne 1994). Membership entails obtaining a certain identity, being different to non-members. A member expects to be treated by the organization in a way that is different from the treatment of non-members, and different behaviour is expected from its members than from others. And members may be excluded.

Membership of an organization differs from other forms of affiliation. For example, a network of individuals consists of a web of relations between people who know each other in one way or the other as friends, acquaintances or relatives. Who belongs to a network is not decided upon, it is latent and develops gradually. Those who no longer fit in, who people indicate their disapproval of, will in time be ostracised; no one wants to talk to them anymore and no one rings them.

Organizations include a *hierarchy*, a right to decide over others. This right can be given to certain people or to some form of decision-making mechanism, for example a voting procedure. Hierarchy entails a form of organized power. The source of the power is a decision, the decision about who shall decide. Those who are given this power do not need the characteristics that bestow power outside organization, for instance superior or desirable resources or strong charisma - they do not have to be leaders (Brunsson and Holmblad Brunsson 2009).

Organizations can issue commands but also *rules* that the members are expected to follow in their actions and classifications (Weber 1968; March, Schulz and Zhou 2000). Rules are mostly in written form and always pronounced. Rules can be contrasted to norms that are not decided by anyone but are handed down within groups or societies via processes of socialization and internalization (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

An organization also has the right to *monitor* compliance with its commands and rules. Monitoring is not just about ensuring that the organization's members do not

do anything that is prohibited; it is equally about attempting to measure and estimate how well the different members carry out their tasks or how much they do, as is done in exams or piecework. A significant part of monitoring in formal organization is performed via the financial and management accounting systems. Such decided monitoring differs from that occurring in other forms of human interaction which is mediated via, for example, rumours and gossip. Gossip is important in networks (Burt 2005: 105).

Organizations also have the right to decide about sanctions, both positive and negative. They can decide to give more resources to some members than to others. They can decide to change a member's status, by using promotions, grading systems, awards, diplomas and medals, for example. Through negative sanctions such as lacking promotions or salary increases or even outright punishments, the sanction of exclusion can often be avoided. Decided sanctions are different from other forms of changes in people's access to resources or in their status, such as those they can obtain by smart operations on markets or by hanging around with celebrities. Bullying and harassments may affect people as negatively as negative sanctions but they generally have not been decided.

Partial organization

Those who wish to organize do not always have the possibility of or interest in building a complete, formal organization. Instead, they can use just one or a few of the organizational elements. They decide to create a kind of partial organization among individuals or among organizations. They organize outside of formal organizations.

It is possible to organize just by using *membership*. In retail and services, firms sometimes form "clubs" for their customers. Loyal customers can become members of the IKEA Family club or the British Airways Executive Club. Restaurants and nightclubs can acquire members by sending out membership cards to celebrities whom they wish to see visiting their clubs. Members obtain special discounts or

other benefits. However, there is no hierarchy; the firm does not have the right to decide over club members; there are no rules that the members must comply with, or in any event very rudimentary ones; there are no sanctions; and there is no automatic right to monitor associated with membership.

It is not uncommon that *hierarchy* is used on its own as an instrument of organizing. When private individuals or representatives of organizations are to accomplish something jointly outside organizations, it is common for them to appoint someone who will decide, at least for a brief period or for a certain task. To appoint a convenor is a form of hierarchy and a convenor has the right to call for a meeting and also to set the agenda for that meeting. And at the meeting, we often appoint a Chair. When we are unsure of the way to the restaurant, we put someone in charge so that we all go in the same direction at least; when we have to steer a sailing-boat together, we appoint a captain.

There are groups in which no one has any idea about who the other participants are and which do not have any jointly decided upon rules but which nevertheless have a hierarchy. This can apply, for instance, to resistance movements, gangs of smugglers or other “underground” groups (Borell and Johansson 1996). Participants in such groups only meet one or two others in the group, give and receive orders or information about what is to be done, and then do this or pass the information or order onwards. The cohesion in such a group arises from a strong internal interdependency between its participants, which can be due to an external threat, for example the risk of disclosure and harsh punishment.

Rules are also imposed on people or organizations not included in the same organization as the rule-imposer. They come without members, hierarchy, monitoring or sanctions. In our earlier work, we have called such rules standards (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000). They are a kind of recommendations where compliance is voluntary. Examples include standards for products, production

processes and management systems imposed by international standardisation organizations. The rules set in books of etiquette provide another example.

There are plenty of organizations which wholly or partly devote themselves to *monitoring* other organizations without necessarily using any other organizational element. Ratings institutes like Standard & Poor's and Moody's monitor what they call the creditworthiness of states, municipalities, and major companies across the world (Kerwer 2002). Some periodicals rank other organizations. The Financial Times regularly ranks business schools all over the world (Wedlin 2006). World Human Rights Watch monitors how states behave when it comes to dealing with human rights. Such ratings and rankings are decided attempts to create status orders. Another kind of monitoring is provided by much social science research at universities, public opinion institutes or elsewhere that registers and measures what people in different social groups do, how they feel and what they think.

Other organizers decide on *sanctions*. Certification and accreditation institutes make decisions to pass or fail those seeking certification and accreditation and this affects the recipients' identity as well as their status. Others set up prizes and awards which can bestow both status and resources on the winner. There are also negative, ironic "prizes", for instance to the worst company as to gender equality or environment protection.

Even if organizational elements can exist on their own, it is common for organizers to utilize more than one organizational element or to rely on other organizers for other elements. Certain standards are supplemented with systems of certification decided by the standardizers or by other organizations. Rankings are sometimes based on decided rules. Membership of a customer club can be supplemented by a system of monitoring the customers' purchasing habits. In partnerships between organizations hierarchy may be combined with membership without any rules or sanctions (Sandebring 2006). Other partnerships may rest on membership and rules or

membership and monitoring without any other elements being involved (Lembke 2006).

3. The particularity of organization

Complete organization and partial organization are not only different forms of order; they are also similar in important respects sharing some general characteristics of organization. Although networks and institutions are concepts that describe very different phenomena (arguably even on different “levels”), there are some similarities between organization and each of these concepts – similarities that seem to have led to the concepts of network and institution being used also for phenomena of organization. Just like networks organization is a form of interaction among people or organizations. And like an institution organization can produce a social order with common patterns of behaviour and shared distinctions with some stability over time that create predictability and facilitate interaction among people and organizations (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Scott 1995).

But here the similarities end. Both complete and partial organization radically differ from institutions and networks, and on several counts they can be regarded as the opposite of these forms.

Institutions and networks, defined narrowly, are both examples of emergent social orders, which happen more than they are created (Abrahamsson 2007). Berger and Luckmann described institutions as results of routinization and habitualization of interaction. They result from a mutual adaptation between people which leads to certain routines that are repeated and after some time taken for granted (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Institutions are embedded as elements in larger cultures (ibid.) In a corresponding way, a genuine network arises spontaneously through people meeting in various contexts and getting to know one another (Bommes and Tacke 2005). This develops through those who are involved in the network having their own contacts,

which coincide, or not, with each other. The relationships that make up a network are embedded in other social relations and the boundaries of a network are unclear (Thompson 2003, Borgatti and Foster 2003).

The fact that both forms of organization are not emergent but are based on decisions has several important implications. A decision consists of expectations on the behaviour of others that is communicated to those for whom these expectations are relevant.

First, this implies that organization, whether complete or partial, constitute *attempts* to create an order. It is far from certain that these attempts fully succeed, that the decisions are implemented. People may refuse to accept membership or hierarchy, they may neglect rules, and inspections and sanctions may fail to materialize. As much research in organization theory has demonstrated during the last fifty years the resulting order is sometimes substantially different from what organizers in complete organizations have intended. The same is true for partial organization.

In contrast, the concepts of institution and network describe already existing orders. There are no failed institutions or networks - either there is an institution or a network or there is none. Studies of institutions and networks are studies of results, while studies of organization include both attempts and results, both the order people try to create and the order that actually appears. Modern organizational research is a little bit of today's dismal science: it is not only interested in successes but also in failures - why things often do not turn out as we had decided.

Secondly, decisions dramatize *uncertainty* (Luhmann 2000). Decisions are attempts at creating certainty, at establishing what the future will look like. But they also create uncertainty by demonstrating that the future is chosen; so it could be different. In this way decisions pave the way for contestation. Decisions to impose new taxes on a specific group of people or to introduce school uniforms are likely to rise more and stronger protests than traditional large wage differences among occupations or

strong similarities in clothing due to fashion. Also, organization tends to be challenged because it competes with established institutions and networks: a standard reason to organize is to try to establish an order that is different from the one that would exist otherwise.

Thus, whether we organize inside or outside formal organizations, there is a great risk that decisions and their content will be called into question. Even if the decisions have been successful and led to the desired organization, the organization will be fragile. As long as the prevailing order is perceived specifically as organization, i.e. a decided order, it will be open to criticism for not being the right one; options can be pointed out and demands for new decisions can be put forward. Organized orders are typically challenged orders characterized by a certain instability. In other words organization is opposite institution in the sense that it is not taken for granted. While decisions emphasize the existence of options, for institutions there seems to be no reasonable alternative.

History is full of organizers who have attempted to portray the order they have decided upon as more firmly grounded than just organized, as necessary or natural without options: the King obtained his power by God's grace, and among managements and governments it is popular to speak of "economic necessities". However, far from all of these attempts have succeeded – the order has often been perceived, nevertheless, as decided upon, as only one option among many possible ones and worth challenging.

Thirdly, decisions provide a ready-made way of *explaining* the prevailing order – the order is explained by the decisions that have been made. Organization appears to be more easily explained than institutions and networks whose emergence are the result of the interaction among many people over an extensive period of time. At the same time, high demands are placed on really being able to explain organized orders. Unclear points during the decision-making process easily lead to calls for greater transparency and accountability – there is a desire to know who made the decision,

when it happened and in which context. In contrast to behaviour according to institutions which need no mobilisation or justification (Jepperson 1991) organizational decisions and actions need much of both.

Fourthly and relatedly, decisions indicate the *significance of individual people*. They link order to a few distinct decision-makers (or in the extreme case only to one). Even if institutions and networks are perceived as human products and not states of nature it is fundamentally unclear how they have arisen. At least, they cannot be explained by referring to a few persons only; they can only be explained by reference to the behaviour of all the people that share an institution or all the people who participate in the network.

It is by means of the decisions linking actions and distinctions to people, that the legitimacy of the former becomes partly dependent on the latter – that we find it easier to accept an order which has been decided upon by the right people and in a proper way. And, as often observed in the organization literature, sometimes the legitimacy is weak because people want to make decisions for themselves: Both when it comes to complete and partial organization people have a limited “zone of indifference” (Barnard 1938). In contrast, for those sharing an institution or those participating in a network these forms are by definition legitimate. For those observing institutions and networks legitimacy may be an issue but it is not dependent on the status of just a few participants.

Furthermore, decisions dramatize *human control*; that the decision-makers are causes of subsequent actions. Because decisions are perceived as choices influenced by the decision-makers’ preferences (March and Simon 1958), they portray the decision-makers as having a free will and as using it – that they make choices of their own. At the same time, they are portrayed as causes - they cause future actions or classifications. Being a cause by one’s free will is the way of becoming responsible (Aristotle 1984). Making decisions is, perhaps, the most effective way of assuming responsibility that is available to us. In formal organizations, it is clear who is

responsible, in both the legal and moral senses. Formal organizations concentrate responsibility: they make certain people, the decision-makers, highly responsible and other members relatively irresponsible (Brunsson 1985; Kühl 2005). And organizing outside organizations also concentrates responsibility to some extent. This is in contrast to institutions and networks where responsibility is not concentrated but highly diluted; indeed everyone or noone is responsible, which makes responsibility a fairly irrelevant issue.

4 An illustration: global organization

Just like complete, formal organization, partial organization is a very common phenomenon. Global organization provides an excellent example not only of partial organization but also of the limitation with using a narrow concept of organization.

There is a strong global order – great similarities all over the world regarding how people act and which distinctions they make. It is remarkably easy to interact and communicate with people and organizations over great distances. It is almost as easy for us to anticipate distant individuals' and organizations' reactions as it is for us to anticipate those closer to us. There are good technical conditions for interacting with others remotely in the form of, for instance, good data and aeronautical communications. It is an important task to explain how such an order is possible.

Traditionally, scholars have explained much societal order with a special type of complete formal organization – with demarcated and mighty nation states that created order within their own territories. Even though social scientists, to a very limited extent, have called states organizations or pointed to the similarities between states and other organizations, they have often emphasized the organizational elements of states – states' access to members, hierarchy, rules and the right to monitor and to impose sanctions: states have decided over citizenship, appointed governments, issued laws, monitored almost everything via entities as statistical

agencies, tax authorities or police forces and maintained a complex system of sanctions in the form of subsidies and law enforcement.

Through globalisation and other processes states seem to have lost some of their previous importance and have got a somewhat different role (Sassen 2006). The fact that states have obtained an altered role does not necessarily mean, however, that the modern world is less organized than previously. We believe that social scientists' familiarity with states as an explanatory factor has created a certain amount of confusion with regard to explaining contemporary global order. The fact that there is no overarching formal organization, no world state, seems to have led to an impression of lack of order (Rosenau 1992) or the assumption that new concepts such as governance (Kjaer 2004) and networks (Castells 1996) are needed rather than old ones such as organization.

When broadening the concept of organization to include both complete and partial forms it is easy to see that the existing global order is to a large extent an organized order. There are many complete organizations working on a global scale, for example transnational companies or pressure groups such as the World Wildlife Fund or Greenpeace. There are also more than 10,000 international meta-organizations, organizations where other organizations are the members. Examples range from the UN and the EU to the International Egg Commission, from Birdlife International to the International Cremation Federation. These organizations create orders among their members that exceed the territories of states (Ahrne and Brunsson 2008).

However, much global organization is partial, consisting of one or two organizational elements or different combinations of them (Ahrne and Brunsson 2006). Most of these organizational elements are provided by complete formal organizations that try to organize other formal organizations. International standardisation organizations and many other international individual-based organizations or meta-organizations such as Amnesty International or the OECD create standards for organizations all over the world. Certification organizations

certify companies right across the world in accordance with rules governing quality or corporate social responsibility. Not only Standard and Poor's and Financial Times but many other organizations rate and rank other organizations globally. They contribute to creating global status orders, as do award committees such as those distributing the European Quality Prize or the Nobel Prize. Transnational partnerships among states, firms and voluntary associations use various combinations of organizational elements (Mörth 2008).

Global markets provide one example of an area that is organized by partial organization. Trade across national boundaries, like all trade, must be organized in order to work. International markets are dependent on both national and international organizing. Just who can be a player on a certain market is determined by, for instance, various systems of authorisation and certification, as well as by calls to boycott certain producers in certain countries made by pressure groups or by laws governing age limits applicable to consumers. States and international meta-organizations such as the WTO and the EU acquire hierarchical authority and the opportunity to issue rules. Rules applied to marketplaces do not just govern who will be allowed to act as sellers and purchasers, but also the quality of the goods. They are partly regulated by government agencies but also to a high degree by standards issued by international standardisation organizations and by interest organizations, for example in cases of environmental and fair trade labelling. There are also rules governing how trade is to be conducted in the form of, for instance, national although very similar competition laws (Djelic 2006). There are a number of international law firms and legal associations involved in transnational law-making in the context of commercial and corporate law (Quack 2007). Markets are monitored in a number of ways; by stockbrokers, banks, statistics agencies, and interest organizations. Sellers not meeting standards are exposed to all sorts of sanctions, from refused certification to boycott. Purchasers who purchase from the wrong supplier, for example retail companies buying goods from producers using child labour, are exposed to similar measures.

It seems reasonable to assume that substantially less of contemporary global order than of the old national orders is an order of institutions. Fairly little of global order seems to be taken for granted by many people. Instead it is often the subject of criticism, challenges, and attempts at change (Boström and Tamm Hallström 2010).

Yet, all these organization efforts create much global coordination. Just as coordination is facilitated by organization within formal organizations such as states or firms, partial organization at the transnational or global level facilitates transnational or global coordination. For one thing, transnational organization facilitates transnational networks of people or organizations: they are highly dependent on modern technology like data communications and air transportation. However, the global utilization of this technology would not be possible without extensive organization on the global level, among other things of the efforts of international standardisation organizations and organizations like IATA or the Internet Society.

5. The dynamics of organization

How does partial organization arise? Is partial organization the result of failed attempts to create complete organization or are there organizers, be they individuals or organizations, who willingly restrict themselves to introducing just a few organizational elements in their attempts to organize their environment?

In many respects it is more difficult for organizers to create a desired order if they have access to only a few organizational elements. Without membership it is more difficult to get individuals or organizations to pay attention to your attempts to organize and one cannot expect the kind of loyalty that membership sometimes evokes. Nor can organizers use membership as a form sanction – they cannot threaten individuals or organizations with exclusion nor appeal to them with the possibility of inclusion.

Without hierarchy organizers have problems in compelling others to obey their decisions. And the chances of monitoring are reduced - one cannot force persons or organizations to account for the part of their behaviour that is not openly traceable. Without hierarchy it is also more difficult to avoid competition from other organizers. Hierarchy implies rules for who are to make decisions and without such a rule decision-making is open to anyone. For standardisers who have no access to other organizational elements, competition is always a possibility and often a reality. The result of many people attempting to organize in competition with each other may be an increasing disorder rather than the creation of a new order.

If there are no rules every action or distinction has to be motivated by a new decision which may decrease consistency and increase uncertainty. Organizers without access to monitoring and sanctions not only have difficulties in making others comply to their rules, they also have difficulty seeing that the rules have failed. Organizers without sanctions run the risk to organize only the willing - who may, perhaps, have organized themselves in the same manner even without this particular organizer.

Thus, organizers have reason to try to add organizational elements to their repertoire. The management of common-pool resource systems provide a further example. Ostrom (1990) demonstrated that when people were able to use several organizational elements such as membership, rules and monitoring, they were more likely to manage a shared resource successfully than when they had been unable to organize to the same extent.

Organizers may even have reason to go the whole way of creating a complete, formal organization. A formal organization adds the benefit that people expect it to contain all organizational elements so the use of these do not require special efforts of legitimation. Furthermore, in contrast to partial organization, complete organizations can own resources and ownership attracts members who want and hope to be able to share some of these resources.

In conclusion, we expect some partial organization to be the result of an inability of organizers to use more than one or a few organizational elements. They have not had the energy or resources necessary or they have met too much resistance from those whom they try to organize. Or they have found that attempts to apply one element sometimes obstruct the use of another. For example, insisting on a hierarchy or on strict rules may make it more difficult to recruit members, especially if the potential members are other organizations who want to keep most of their own hierarchy and rules (Ahrne and Brunsson 2008, Ch 4).

Reasons for partial organization

However, all partial organization is not a failure to form a complete organization. Partial organization may be deliberately chosen. The deficiencies of partial organization do not necessarily lead organizers to strive for adding organizational elements or creating complete organizations.

One reason is that there may be no *need* for adding more organizational elements because the desired order exists anyway. If there is already a network an organizer can abstain from using membership and still hope that the rules will reach out. In order to organize people dwelling in a certain place or staying in a certain geographical area (such as for instance a supermarket, a camping-ground or a park) membership is not needed. Rules, monitoring and even sanctions may be aimed at all those who happen to occupy that place.

If there are already strong norms in a certain field that coincide with the values of the organizer it is unnecessary to decide about rules and it may be quite enough to use other elements. In a collaboration between researchers from various universities, for instance, it is not necessary to make new rules for how to review and evaluate scientific work. Neither it is necessary to organize monitoring or sanctions. The seminar is an institutionalized form of monitoring and approvals or misgivings about the quality of the work of the others are spread around through rumours and

gossip among colleagues anyway. Other organizational elements, such as membership and hierarchy, may however be required in order to arrange for the common meetings and seminars and set up an agenda for such meetings.

Standards organizations, such as ISO, CEN or CENELEC are often able to achieve compliance with their standards without using other elements. The organizations enjoy a high legitimacy (Tamm Hallström 2004) and for reputational reasons many of their standards are difficult not to comply with. Also organizations with a need for coordinating themselves with others have to comply with the standards once a number of important organizations have started complying with them.

If everyone knows how certain persons or organizations behave, then there is no need to organize any special monitoring. On the other hand, if it is difficult to know what people and organizations are doing, but we are able to rely on the fact that they are being hit by negative effects in the form of, for example, people refusing to buy their products if the knowledge spreads, then there is no need to organize special sanctions - monitoring will be enough.

Moreover, a single organizer may feel no need to use certain organizational elements because organization is provided through a division of labour among several organizers where each organizer provides only one element each but the elements support each other. An example is the area of quality (Tamm Hallström 2004). Standardisation organizations develop quality standards; others test whether or not companies and other organizations are complying with the standards and issue certificates. A horde of consultants provide the organizations with advice regarding what they should do to implement the standards and achieve certification. In many countries prizes for the organization with the highest level of quality is awarded annually. By means of all these endeavours, a high overall degree of organization is created.

Other organizers may abstain from using all organizational elements because a low

degree of organization is *advantageous* for them. Adding more elements does not only bring benefits but also costs. Organizers with limited resources have reason to avoid introducing organizational elements if they can find less costly ways of reaching their goals.

For a standardizer it may be a good idea to leave monitoring and sanctions to others (Seidl 2007). Monitoring and sanctions often require substantial resources that can be used for other purposes. If a partnership is organized only with membership and rules it will be up to the members themselves to monitor and sanction each other. Some members may for instance reduce or inhibit their cooperation with another member if they find out that this member does not follow the rules.

As mentioned, hierarchy is not only a source of power, it also concentrates responsibility to those at the top, and those who do not like that have reason to avoid using the element of hierarchy. The role of organizers who abstain from hierarchy is to suggest compliance rather than forcing others; the final decision is made by the compliers and therefore they get most of the responsibility. For instance, the responsibility for following standards and the effects thereof lie mainly with the rule followers while responsibility for state law or binding rules in companies lie primarily with the rule setters. This distribution is reflected in the distribution of systems for complaint - standardizers meet much less systematic challenges than rule-setters in states and companies who meet an intricate set of possibilities to appeal, unions and protest movements (Brunsson 1999)

Having members is a mixed blessing. Members are not only useful, they are also cumbersome. They tend to demand influence and make decision-making more complicated. The organizers may be held responsible for what the members are doing even when the behaviour has not been decided or intended by the organizer. In some so called public-private partnerships it has been a successful strategy not to have specific members. This made it more feasible for the initiating organization to

change their partners according to their wishes when the aims of the cooperation changed (Sandebring 2006).

Organizing as resistance

Those who are the objects for attempts at organizing may react with opposition and try to avoid any organization imposed by others. They want to decide for themselves or they are already organized by others and in another way. However, the opposite reaction is also possible - to demand more organization rather than less. Those who are being organized may insist on and contribute to the use of more organizational elements. They can refer to claims for democracy: Standard liberal conceptions of democracy are closely tied to organization, in particular complete formal organization (Mörth 2004).

For example, those who are exposed to merely sanctions may require both monitoring and rules. Especially people and organizations who are placed at the bottom of a status order or are missing a prize are likely to demand that fixed rules are decided and they may also want to become monitored in order to demonstrate that they are in fact good rule-followers. Those exposed to standards may request hierarchy in order to avoid some of their own responsibility and place more of it on the rule-setters, so that systems of complaints can be installed.

Those who are dissatisfied on all counts with being organized by others, can themselves be tempted to organize. For example, they can set up their own awards or rankings. Business schools in Europe which are regularly ranked by, for instance, the Financial Times have, for example, set up their own formal meta-organization, EQUIS, which has the important task of scrutinizing the members and deciding whether they can be certified in accordance with EQUIS' rules. Forming such meta-organizations as a kind of defence is not unusual; such organizations can assert that their members meet the requirements of various interest groups by means of the meta-organization's own rules, systems of monitoring, and sanctions and thus do not

need to consider outsiders' attempts at organizing. Meta-organizations are examples of a high-grade form of organizing which may outcompete low-grade ones.

In conclusion not only organizers but also those exposed to attempts at organizing have reason to add elements of organization, which provides a force for more organization. But just as organizers they sometimes do not have the interest or capacity to create more organization. And organizers may resist more organization just because it would only give the organized but not themselves benefits. It is an important topic for research to investigate what situations and what patterns or interaction between organizers and organized give rise to more or less organization.

6. Organizing institutions and networks

Organization may occur as a reaction against the order provided by existing institutions or networks and constitute attempts at erasing some perceived detriments of these forms. Institutions and networks can be transformed into organization.

Transformation in the other direction, from organization to institution and network, is an old theme in organization theory. Organizations become institutionalized by becoming more or less taken for granted (Selznick 1957). And an organization may break up into informal networks among colleagues and workmates, for instance in the shape of oligarchies (Michels 1962) or as "informal organization" (Blau and Scott 1963). Partial organization may undergo similar transformations. Single organizational elements become institutionalized. For example, a rule becomes institutionalized when people do not recall that it was once decided, as well as the motivations used and the alternatives considered. Likewise partial organization may be turned into a network – for example, one can think of a cartel that is forbidden by the authorities to continue using organizational elements such as common rules and

monitoring but where the participating firms still have contacts with each other in the form of a network.

However, less attention has been paid to how and why institutions or networks become organized and what the consequences are of such a development. Studying the organization of institutions or networks can give us some further clues to why there is a demand for organization and also illuminate some of its consequences. In this section we suggest that there are three main reasons why people try to turn institutions or networks into more organized orders. One motive may be to change the behaviour and distinctions that these forms provide. Another motive may be the contemporarily strong claim for more transparency and accountability: to create an order that is easier to understand and explain. In the case of networks a third possible motive is to create an environment.

Organizing institutions

It is easier to organize in a way that does not too much deviate from the order provided by existing institutions (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Yet organization is a common strategy for those who want to change the power relations, behaviour, identities or status orders that are institutionalized. For example, new laws are intended not only to codify existing norms in society but also to adjust people's behaviour and to influence identities and status orders. Social movements such as environment groups try to destabilize institutions in a direct way in opinion-moulding attempts where they challenge existing conceptions and norms. But they also try to accomplish change via organization: they formulate standards, install monitoring systems and establish certification schemes (Boström and Klintman 2008).

Organizing can be expected to be a quicker method than attempts at changing institutions directly. Those who want people to quickly adopt better table manners are well advised to write books of etiquette rather than to rely on processes of socialization and civilization. But many organizers want their new organized order

to become institutionalized. Radical politics has often had the purpose of institutional change but organization as the main method – as is recently illustrated by gender equality politics in some countries (Lindvert 2002). New laws breaking with existing norms may over time be transformed into new norms.

Sometimes attempts at change are attempts to imitate an order already existing somewhere else. For example, a firm or university may want to imitate another successful firm or university hoping to achieve similar successes. In such cases organization can be expected to be the dominant means for change – by selection or by transformation. It is easier to find and imitate another organizations' decisions – for instance to imitate its rules and reward system – than it is to find out what people in the imitated organization take for granted. And even if one investigates and understands the other organization's institutions, it is difficult to transfer these institutions directly into a context where they are lacking; instead one has to "translate" an institutional order into organizational terms and then try to implement this organization. What is taken for granted in the imitated context becomes decided organization in the imitator's context, at least as a first step.

For example, suppose economically successful regions are characterized by certain state laws in combination with a tradition of openness among firms. For politicians who want to create a similar success elsewhere it is then easier to imitate the laws than to make thousands of introvert and secluded firms to become open towards each other. One might install rules requiring such openness, but such rules are not the same as the institution of openness within the imitated region and it is uncertain whether they lead to the same degree and kind of openness, let alone the same degree of success.

A further purpose of organizing institutions is to increase transparency and accountability. The idea is not to change the existing order but to clarify what it looks like and its area of application. Institutional orders are often opaque and difficult to understand, in particular for outsiders and newcomers. When these latter want

to know what is going on (more transparency), they are likely to demand organization. And when they want accountability - to be able to explain the order and find someone accountable and responsible they are likely to make the same demands.

A topical example is provided by ethical codes for scientific research. Science is becoming a global institution (Drori et al 2003). It includes an ethos of science characterized by such values as intellectual honesty, integrity and disinterestedness (Merton 1968: 596). For those not involved in scientific research it is difficult to know what practical meaning these values have and the extent to which they actually control scientific practice. Realizing the enormous influence of science on contemporary society, people have put forward demands of information and control. Politicians have required increased transparency, accountability and opportunities for negative and positive sanctions. In many countries research councils and the like have formulated and decided on explicit ethical rules for scientists as well as systems for inspection and sanctions (Kalleberg 2003).

It is a common assumption that institutions are reinforced by being organized. The system of law is partly intended to reinforce and prevent deviations from behaviour that is already taken for granted by a vast majority. Scott (1995) argued that strong institutions are characterized not only by dominating people's way of thinking and their norms (the "cognitive and normative pillars"), but also that they are codified in organizational elements such as written rules and monitoring and sanctioning activities (the "regulative pillar").

However, institutions may also be weakened by organization. By exposing a taken for granted order for decisions, one opens it for questioning, challenges and discussion. When decisions are made regarding rules, monitoring and sanctions fewer take the order for granted and the institution may dissolve. The decided order has a lower impact than the institutionalized. Also, the order becomes easier to change - at least it seems to be more changeable; in contrast to institutions

organization offer seemingly easy instruments of change: new decisions. Even if people originally wanted to organize just in order to increase the transparency of an institutionalized order, they may find that the new transparent order is much less stable than the old one.

The organizing of scientific ethics has led to more discussion, criticisms and the suggestion of alternative rules. Although change was not presented as a purpose it may be the result. In countries such as Germany where a certain amount of social responsibility can be said to be institutionalized since long, the introduction of the concept of “Corporate Social Responsibility” was met by skepticism from the firms – it seemed to suggest an order already existing (Kinderman 2008). But one might speculate that the adoption of the concept will anyway create a new situation with more discussion and challenges than before.

A possible strategy for change of an institutional order is to first organize it (for instance with reference to the need for transparency and accountability) and thereby weaken it and as a second step suggest and try to implement a new organization. But this strategy cannot be expected to always work. Under which conditions organization weakens or reinforces institutional orders is an important question for research, as is the question to what extent organizers are aware of such dynamics.

A more specific version of this question is what the effects are of the popular demands for transparency and accountability (Boström and Garsten 2008; Garsten and Lindh de Montoya 2008) under different conditions and to what extent these demands are made with the intention of achieving change rather than just transparency and accountability.

Organizing networks

In a genuine network there are no organizational elements. It is exactly the absence of such organizational elements that accounts for the special qualities that are

associated with networks (see for example Kanter and Eccles 1992: 525). The absence of a hierarchy allows for flexibility and spontaneity. Norms emerge and no one can be held accountable for them. In many contexts, it is excellent for those involved that a network goes unnoticed and remains unknown to outsiders. Secrecy is even an important precondition for the existence of many networks: For politicians in leading positions it could be detrimental for the support among their voters if their network of relations with other politicians or business-leaders would be publicly announced.

Still some participants may have good reasons to try to change an existing network structure. Organization is a common way of trying to achieve change. If someone wants to break with the embeddedness of a network one method is to make a list of the members. This is a way to make a network visible that also enables people to arrange special meetings and gathering.

Even though there is no hierarchy a network does not lack tensions and disparities. There are often those who have a stronger position, for instance, due to having more contacts within the network than most of the others involved, and in this way are able to exert more influence (Burt 2005). For those wishing to change such power balances, or at least handle and solve conflicts organization is a good method. They may suggest the creation of a visible decision-making order where, for instance, everyone who is involved should have the right to take part in decision-making. Once there is a way of making decisions further changes are facilitated, such as the possibility to issue rules.

If membership is supplemented by hierarchy members may be able to issue common statements or demands on behalf of a certain actor, which they could not do as individuals involved in a network. Such a transformation from a network to a partial organization is necessary for instance if people involved in a network have reason to express a certain standpoint in a political issue or raise demands against state authorities. In order to be able to formulate such a statement it is necessary to have some form of hierarchy. And in order for such a statement or demand to be taken

seriously by actors in the environment there have to be some people who can be considered responsible for the decision and are able to express themselves on behalf of the other members. But it is not necessary to construct a complete organization with elements such as monitoring and sanctions.

Even for participants it is difficult to know what a network looks like and what is going on. And it is even more difficult to find an explanation for it, particularly an explanation that refers to individual people - that makes someone accountable and responsible for a network. Just as in the case of institutions, wishes to increase transparency and accountability often leads to claims for organization. The complexity and extension of some inter-firm networks is a strong incentive to codify collaboration, to agree upon common rules and to introduce forms of monitoring (Grandori 1997).

External parties may be those demanding and initiating the organization of networks. It is problematic for others to interact with a network, because the lack of membership makes the distinction between a network and its environment unclear. Once you start interacting with a network, you become part of the network. Thus it is in the interest of those who want to approach a network for some form of cooperation or negotiations to demand that it will have to introduce some elements of organization, at least membership.

Football clubs want their supporters to start supporter clubs because then they can be negotiation partners and a distinction between the club itself and its supporters relieves the club from responsibility for the supporters' actions. Other organizations try to organize networks in their environment in order to get a better control over and predictability in their contacts with people in these networks and arrange meetings and special events for them. Universities organize alumni associations, firms organize customer clubs and the European Union does not want to negotiate and talk to informal lobby groups but prefer to have contacts with organized trade associations.

Conceptual confusion

Elements of organization are recognized in some network literature. According to Graham F. Thompson (2003) many networks need to be managed to prevent them from becoming all too chaotic and he differentiates between self-organized and organized networks. Others have talked about “bureaucratic networks” (Grandori 1997:912) or control in networks (Gössling 2007) as well as “strategic networks” (Gulati, Nohria and Zaheer 2000). Yet, these authors still regard all such constellations as networks and as something very different from organization as long as they are not complete organizations. But adding elements of organization are important steps that turn networks into something that no longer has the characteristics of networks such as extreme flexibility, spontaneity and embeddedness. A partial organization consisting of for example members and some kind of hierarchy is more visible and autonomous than a network but it may also be subject to more criticism and demands from other actors than a network. And it may, in contrast to a network, fail. These differences are concealed by using the same term for networks and partial organization

Similarly, it makes a difference if an order is organized or institutionalized. Using the term institution for a partial organization conveys the impression that it is taken for granted, accepted and stable. The term conceals the fact that a partial organization may be highly questioned and much more fragile and prone to change and even failure than orders that are firmly institutionalized.

By confusing organization with institution we risk missing important aspects of the phenomena we are interested in. For instance, characterising all ordering elements on the global scene as institutions gives an impression of too much contentment and stability. And we do not have to find institutions to say something important about social order. For instance, the fact that all global order is not institutionalized does not mean that it is unimportant - organization has important effects even if it has not become taken for granted.

7. Implications for organization theory

We have suggested a concept of organization that is somewhat broader than only encompassing formal organizations. By narrowing down the concepts of network and institution there is room for such a concept. The broader concept of organization has some similarity with how the concept was used before the arrival of the modern social sciences – as a designation for how society at large was organized (Luhmann 2005, pp 389-91). While organization understood as formal organization has separated organization studies from other social science, a broader concept of organization makes studies of organization relevant for wider social science issues. The studies of formal organizations has long been characterized by an extensive import of concepts and ideas from other fields of study and from more general theories of society while ideas and concepts have not flowed so easily in the other direction. A broader concept of organization makes it more probable that other fields of social science will learn from theories about organization.

However, our definition of organization is also narrower than the prevalent one because it does not include what students of organizations have called “informal organization” (Blau and Scott 1963). This concept is meant to cover aspects of formal organizations that are not decided. In our terms there is no informal organization. It is a fundamental insight from organization studies that far from all that that occurs within the framework of formal organizations is organized. However, the order that is not organized deserves its own concepts. The concepts of network and institution seem to be useful for describing some aspects of this order. Large formal organizations are likely to contain various kinds of networks among the members, and to include some local ways of interacting that is taken for granted by the members whether it has its origin in organization or not. Furthermore, organizational members are part of networks with external parties and they are heavily influenced

by general societal institutions. Indeed, it is doubtful whether a formal organization could function without these additional ordering principles, but they are not examples of organization. Just as there can exist various combinations of organization, networks and institutions outside and among formal organizations, there can exist various combinations within them.

By differentiating between organization, network and institution both inside and outside formal organizations the specific traits of each respective order is made explicit and clear. But it also matters which organizational elements that are used or not used; varying combinations of elements have different consequences. It makes a difference whether a network starts to organize its membership or if it starts to have a hierarchy or rules.

And even if we are interested in the formation of institutions only, we had better observing organization - many institutions start as organization. So called "institutional entrepreneurs" (DiMaggio 1988) not only try to change people's norms and conceptions, they also work with organization. And even if many organizers, whether within or outside formal organizations, dream of turning their specific organization into an institution for many, far from all succeed. However, shall we understand the successes it is recommendable to study the process all the way from organizing to institutionalization as well as to compare them to the counter-examples- organization that has not turned into institution.

There are many forms of partial organization consisting of various combinations of organizational elements. It is a crucial task for students of organization to investigate how different forms arise and what situations are likely to produce them. And the same kind of research questions can be asked about the functioning and effects of partial organization as have traditionally been asked about formal organizations, including the classical questions about coordination and power. For example, one can ask what the main coordination problems in various forms of partial organization are and what forms are best suited for effective coordination. And what

is the distribution of power and responsibility in different forms and what forms of partial organization lend themselves more easily to democratic ambitions?

Partial organization may sound as something less important and less powerful than complete organization. Recent developments, however, seem to contradict this impression. Contemporary large formal organizations may control enormous resources. Yet, their power is more and more circumscribed by them being organized by outsiders - for instance with the help of an increasing number of standards, monitoring and certification schemes. If we are to understand the contemporary world, partial organization seems as important to analyze as complete organization. Theories of organization are useful for both tasks.

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