EDEN DOCTORAL SEMINAR ON ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

AAHRUS, DENMARK, APRIL 24-27, 2017

PROGRAMME
When: April 24-27, 2017

Where: Aarhus University, Denmark

Credit: 5 ECTS

Faculty: Børge Obel, Aarhus University (Coordinator)
Charles Snow, Penn State University
Dorthe Døjbak Håkonsson, Aarhus University
Panos Mitkidis, Aarhus University & Duke University

Overview

Organizations exist because often they are a better means of allocating resources than a pure market system. Business entrepreneurs learned more than a century ago that it is preferable to hold resources in the form of a firm than it is to obtain them repeatedly from markets. Doing so allows for more control and predictability, and it gives entrepreneurs time to obtain returns on their investments. Holding resources in organizations allows entrepreneurs to take collective action, and over the years business empires have been built in railroads, steel, automobiles, banks, social media, and information search engines. Today, organizations are used in every sector of the economy because they are the most effective means of taking collective action.

The essence of organizing is the ability of individuals, groups, and larger collectives to process information in order to make decisions. Organizations that cannot process information effectively cannot learn and adapt. The field of organization design was born when entrepreneurs, managers, military commanders, and other leaders focused their attention on how to arrange resources inside their organizations. This seminar will examine how and why organizational designs have evolved over time, and it will describe how the process of designing organizations has expanded as knowledge about organizations and management has accumulated. A particular emphasis will be placed on theories and perspectives that lead to practically useful designs.

You are asked to read all of the readings before coming to the seminar so that you are prepared to participate actively in the discussions. In addition, please skim through several issues of the Journal of Organization Design (www.jorgdesign.net) to see the various types of articles that have been published and the kinds of topics that are covered.

NOTE: Final readings and literature will be available one month before the seminar. The size of the afternoon group presentations will be adjusted to fit the number of participants. After the seminar, students will have an assignment that has to be approved to obtain the 5 ECTS points. The assignment can be related to a theoretical or methodological problem. The report from the assignment should be between 10 and 15 pages and will be evaluated as Pass or No Pass.

Learning Objectives

This seminar gives the participant a thorough understanding of the concepts and theories in the field of organization design, including its theoretical foundations and future directions. Students will gain an understanding of the relationship between organization theory and organization design, with an emphasis on theories that have practical applications.
Further, students will obtain a thorough understanding of the differences and similarities of traditional and modern organizational designs, especially newer designs such as collaborative communities and the digital organization. The most recent development in the field, design thinking, will be examined using an experiential exercise.

Each module in the seminar is explored from both a theoretical and methodological perspective. In this way, students will see how different research methodologies are used in the field of organization design. The strengths and limitations of each methodology will be highlighted as we discuss interviews and surveys, case methods, laboratory experiments, and computer simulations. Further, students will learn how to choose the appropriate methodology for a particular study using a triangulation perspective.

Day 1 Theoretical Foundations and Future Directions

Morning Lectures: Charles Snow and Børge Obel (09:00 – 12:30)

Why organizations exist
Logic of organizing
Importance of organizing
Definitions and key concepts
Early organization design efforts

Readings:


Lunch (12:30 – 13:30)

Afternoon lectures: Charles Snow and Børge Obel (13:30 – 17:00)

Purposes of theory: description, explanation, prediction, normative
Relationship between theory and practice
Theoretical models vs. theoretical perspectives
Contingency and multi-contingency theories
The configurational approach
Readings:


Day 2 Traditional and Modern Organizational Designs

Morning Lectures: Charles Snow (09:00 – 12:30)

Initial organizational designs and their evolution
Process of concatenation and the role of capabilities
Organizing in the age of competition, cooperation, and collaboration
Emergence of modern organizational designs
Emerging environmental contingencies and their effects on organizational designs

Readings:


Lunch (12:30 – 13:30)

Afternoon Sessions: Student Group Presentations on Research Methodology


Coffee Break (15:00 – 15:30)


Day 3: Cooperation and Collaboration

Morning Lectures: Panos Mitkidis (09:00 – 12:30)

Trust and cooperation
Goal setting
Performance
Mental models and shared knowledge
Readings:


Lunch (12:30 – 13:30)

Afternoon Sessions: Student Group Presentations on Research Methodology


Coffee Break (15:00 – 15:30)


19:00: Group Dinner

Day 4 Design Process

Morning Lectures: Dorthe Døjbak Håkonsson (09:00 – 12:30)

Redesign process
Design thinking principle
Change management

Readings:


Lunch (12:30 – 13:30)

Afternoon Sessions: Student Group Presentations on Research Methodology


Coffee Break (15:00 – 15:30)


Wrap-up (17:00 – 17:15)