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Organizing Outside Organizations, Part II

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As we have pointed out in the Introduction to the first part of our Thematic Issue, the time is ripe to introduce new perspectives, and new ways of studying organizing processes – inside and outside formal organizations. This necessity arose as the new phenomena could be observed in contemporary societies, most of them related to the digital transformation. This transformation has already attracted much attention, and many studies are being done, not the least by organization scholars, but this is but a beginning.

Digitalization helped to change the ways traditional organizations worked during the times of Covid-19 pandemics, but it also opened the doors to organizing outside, oftentimes despite, and against, formal organizations. The society needs to know more about such informal organizing – to fight against it or to support it, whichever would be judged necessary. While there are great many legal rules defining the status of formal organizations, a growing number of cases of informal organizing is at present the focus of attention of many national jurisdictions. Studies of organizing can be of help – both in understanding the phenomenon, which has become widespread

thanks to globalization and digitalization, and in finding the ways to deal with it.

Gianluca Miscione asks a question that many others did, with no final answer to it: are people like Snowden, Chelsea Manning and Assange, heroes, or villains? While leaking of formal documents is an old story, nowadays it becomes practically a part of daily news, despite of constant development countermeasures. Miscione shows that leakers' *modi operandi* and their goals differ as much as the opinions about them.

Francesco Lola *et al.* took up another contemporary phenomenon: the increase of "smart working" in connection with Covid-19. Many organization scholars are at present studying the effects of the pandemics on the increase of digital work, both in and outside organizations, but nobody thought of using the method Lola and his co-authors did: analyzing opinions on the matter shared at Twitter. The fact that opinions differ is not surprising; but Lola *et al.* predict that the changes in the ways of working – and organizing – resulting from the combination of a global crisis and the digital transformation may be announcing a true cultural revolution, the effects of which are difficult to predict.

The focus on organizing outside formal organization does not equal an assumption that such organizing is loosely dispersed; indeed, such organizing can be structured in ways that either oppose, ignore, or imitate formal organizations. We have three different examples of such emerging forms.

First a Finnish national digital platform, studied by Tricia Clelland Silva and her collaborators. Are platforms the alternative to traditional formal organizations, or just a new shape of those? Clelland Silva prefers to see it as a "community of practice", kept together digitally, but also by a commonly used metaphor. Like in formal organizations, the digital community must be designed and structured, but

unlike in most formal organizations, this is performed by the community members.

Has it worked? The Finnish government was optimistic, but there were also critics.

All agreed, however, that more experiments and thorough studies of their effects are needed.

Martin Koch is convinced that the new experiments are based on what is known about well-functioning formal organizations. His example is The Group of 20 (G20), which he calls "a strange animal that does not fit into the classic scheme of international governmental organizations". Accordingly, it is perhaps less interesting to describe common or uncommon traits of this creature, than – in the spirit of organizing perspective – to look at what it does. He uses four different schools of thought to conceptualize G20 and concludes that such new creations share some elements with formal organizations, while also differing from them. Therefore, new ways of studying, conceptualizing and, in consequence, understanding them, are needed.

Richard Longman, on the other hand, suggests that new forms of organizing are alternatives to the traditional organizations, and that they actually take inspiration for their ways of organizing by choosing opposite ways of performing their tasks. Unlike traditional organizations, which work hard to establish their identities, these new organizers focus on demonstrating the alterity of their creations. Longman's analysis is based on a netnography of an online community.

Most likely both authors are right, and there exist both non-formal organizations built on the experience of formal organizations, and the communities engaged in looking for alternative ways of organizing. But all authors in this issue agree that new forms of analyzing and conceptualizing organizing in digital era are needed. We are therefore thankful to the authors outside of management and organization discipline

who became interested in the approach proposed by us, and suggest that it could be useful in other fields. Vito Lasala *et al.* point out three crucial elements important in organizing as well as in music: time, composition, and improvisation. The parallels are obvious and very instructive!