

In the name of the Most High

Nature Intervenes

Organizations as

Organisms

Sharif University of Technology

School of Management and Economics

S. Alireza Feyzbakhsh, Ph.D.

355

- 
- *Different organizational **needs***
 - *Organizations as **open systems***
 - *The process of **adapting** organizations to **environment***
 - *Organizational **life cycles***
 - *The factors influencing organizational **health & development***
 - *Different **species** of organization*
 - *Relation between **species** & their **ecology***

survival

organization _ environment relation

organizational effectiveness

Introduction

Distinction & Relations among:

molecules

cells

complex organisms

ecology

social ecology

individual

groups

organization

species

population of

organizations

Discovering organizational needs

Employees → satisfied → | perform effectively in the workspace
| lead full
| healthy lives

→ *Hawthorne Studies*

→ *Motivation theories*

Type of need

Maslow's hierarchy

Self actualizing

Ego

Social

Security

Physiologic

Chris Argyris, Frederick Herzberg & Douglas McGregor:

redesigning to create conditions for
personal growth
to
achieve organization's aims & objectives



*more participate
democratic
employee_centered style of leadership*

Human resources management



Technical & human aspects of organization



Sociotechnical systems:

Technology



human

Recognizing the importance of environment:

organizations as open systems

To be open to their environment

&

must achieve an appropriate relation with the
environment

for

surviving

1: The concept of an “open system” /

2: Homeostasis

6: Requisite variety

3: Equifinality

7: System evolution

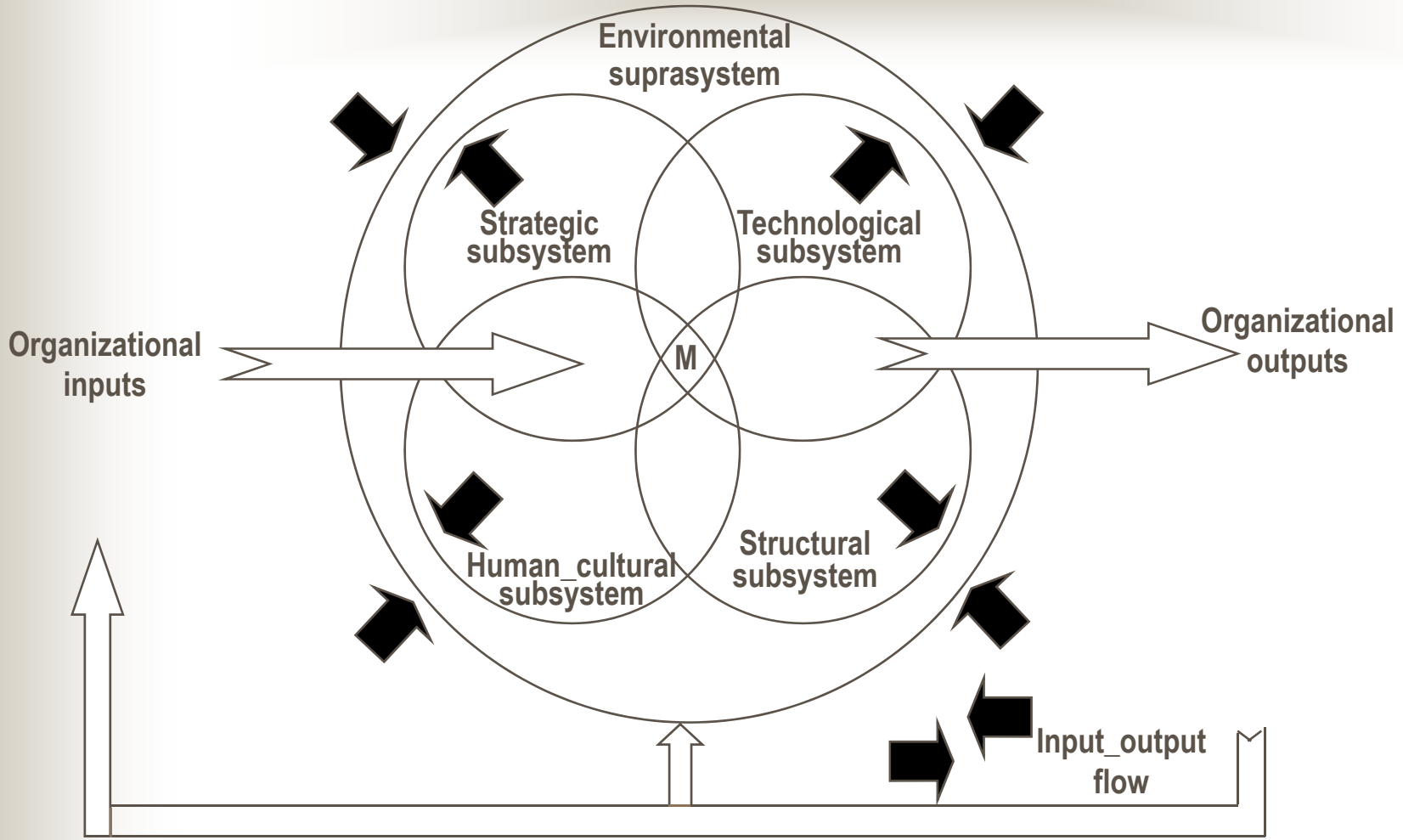
4: Structure, function, differentiation, & integration

5: Entropy & negative entropy

Open Systems concepts

"Open system" approach:

1. Emphasis on the *environment* in which organizations exist
2. Defines an organization in terms of *interrelated subsystems*
3. Establishes *congruencies* between different systems & identifies & eliminates *potential dysfunctions*



Organization as a set of *Independent Subsystem*

Contingency theory:

adapting organization to **environment**

Organizations are **open systems**
careful management for satisfying & balancing
internal **needs**

&

adapting to **environment**



There is no one best way of organizing



It depends on the task & environment

	Rayon Mill	Switch-gear firm	Radio & Television firm	Electronic firm
Nature of environment	Relatively stable	Moderate rate of change	High degree of change	Highly unpredictable
Nature of task facing the firm				
Organization of work				
Nature of authority				
Communications system				
Nature of employee commitment				
	<i>Mechanistic</i> ←————→ <i>Organic</i>			

Burns & Stalker study

Joan Woodward's study:



1 A lot of choices have to be made in organizing

2. Effective organization depends on balancing :

strategy
structure
technology
commitments
needs of people
external environment

Contingency theory:

- 1. Different markets & technologies need different organizations*
- 2. Uncertain & turbulent environments need a higher degree of internal differentiation*

Consequently:

- 1. The degree of differentiation is according to the nature of industry & it's environment*
- 2. The importance of the modes of integration*
- 3. The degree of organicism varies from one organization subunit to another*

The variety of species

Henry Mintzberg :

1. machine bureaucracy

2. divisionalized form

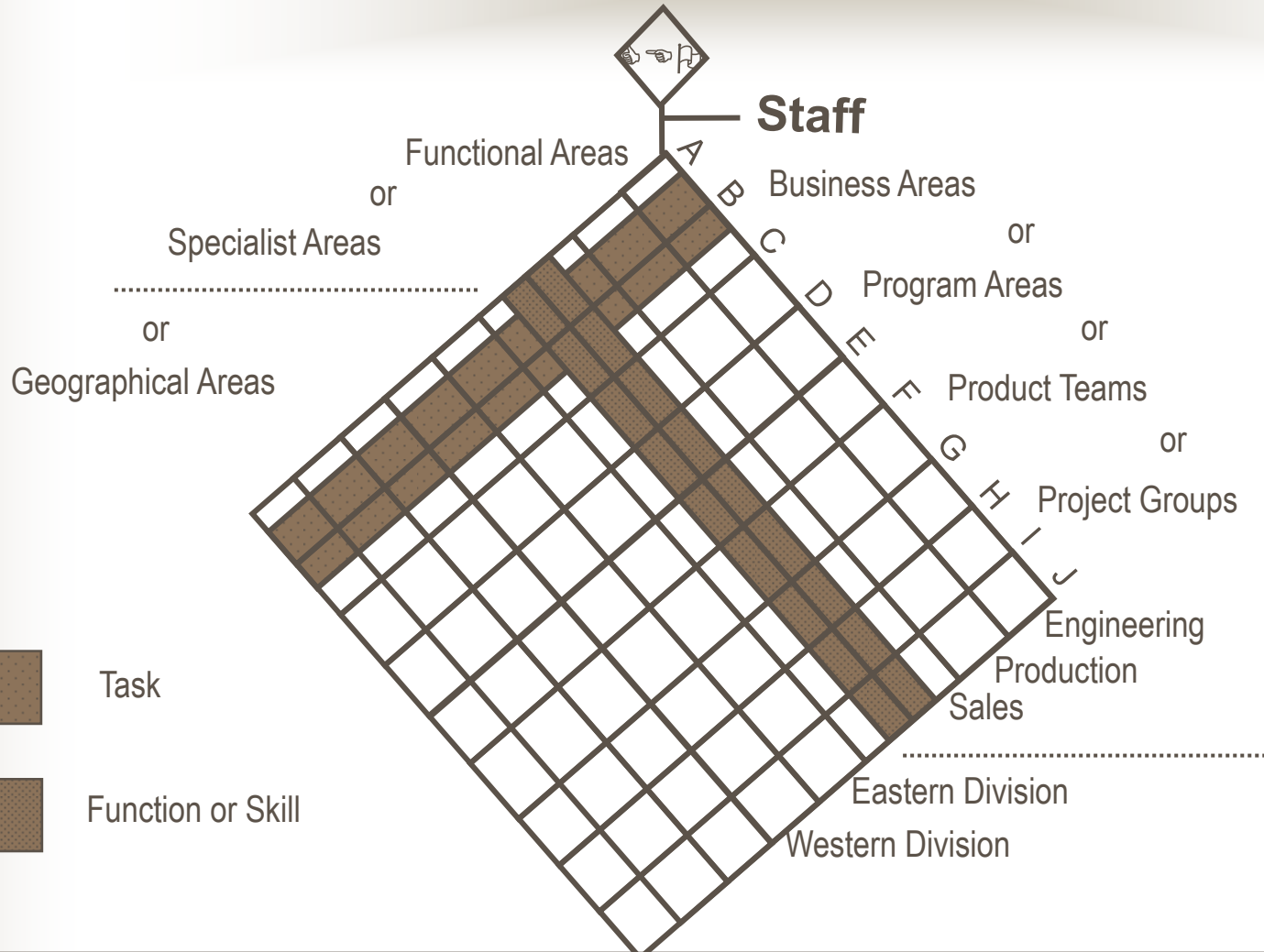
3. professional bureaucracy

4. simple structure

5. adhocracy → Matrix organization

Matrix organization :

Combining the kind of
functional or departmental organization
with a
project_team structure



Matrix Organization

- A bias for action
- Close to the customer
- Autonomy & entrepreneurship
- Productivity through people
- Hands_on, value driven
- Stick to the knitting
- Simultaneous loose_tight properties

Organizing for *action&innovation*

Organizational health & development

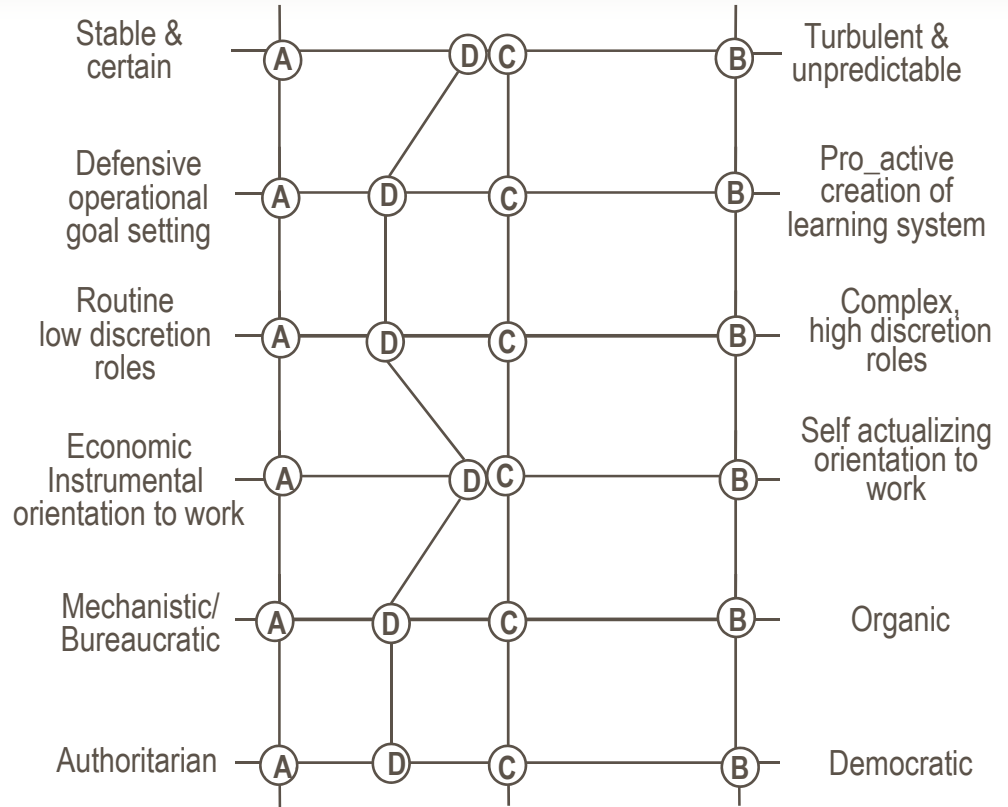
Identifying organizational characteristics & determining compatibility between different elements:

1. What is the nature of the organizations environment ?
2. What kind of strategy is being employed ?
3. What kind of technology is being used ?
4. What kind of people are employed §
what is dominant culture or ethos within the organization ?
5. How is the organizational structure §
what are the dominant managerial philosophies ?

Environment

Organizational Subsystems

Strategic
Technological
Human/cultural
Structural
managerial



Congruence & Incongruence between organizational subsystems



*Analytical diagnosis can be conducted
at the level of subunits*

but note that

*the requirements of the parts do not take
priority
over those of the whole*

Organisms are endowed with a harmonious pattern of
internal & external relations



The incongruence & conflict are often
the rule

Natural selection:

the population Ecology view of organizations

The way environments “select” organizations

by analysis at the level of “populations” of Organizations
and their wider “ecology”.

Darwin’s theory of evolution

Organizations which

1. have too much **flexibility & power**
2. environment has a little force in their survival

environment



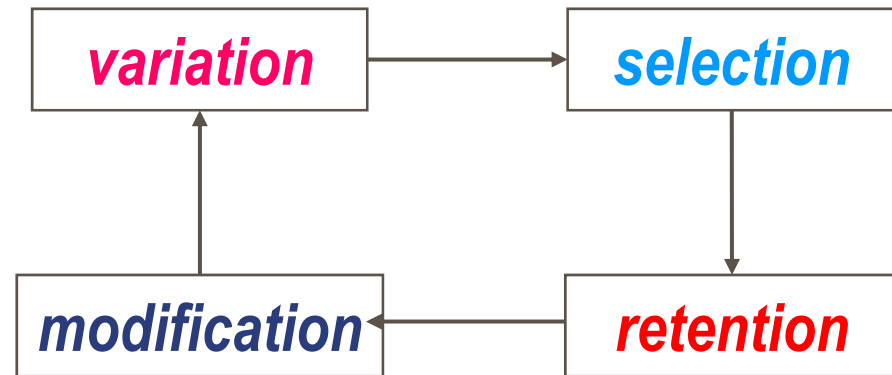
can adapt to their
Natural selection

It depends on there being variation in individual characteristics

→ *population ecology*

→ *evolution:*

Selection :



Evolutionary dynamics at the level of population.

1. How different species rise & decline in important ?
2. Why are there so many different kinds of organizations ?
3. What factors influence their numbers & distribution ?
4. What factors influence a population's ability to acquire or retain a resource niche ?

 *Organizational demography*

Consequently:

- 1. Critiquing the adaptation view of organization*
- 2. The importance of the resource limitations*
- 3. The role of successful innovations*

Problems of this idea :

1. To be far to provide an explanation of how organizations **actually evolve**
2. To ignore that resources can be **abundant & self_renewing**

organizational Ecology :

the creation shared futures

*Population_ecology
&
contingency views*



Organization & environments
are **separate** phenomena

the total Σ ecology



Organisms don't evolve by *adapting* to environmental changes or as a result of *selecting*



survival of the fitting not just

survival of the fittest

Consequently:

- 1. Organizations & their environments are correction*
- 2. Collaboration is often as common as competition*

Trist & his colleagues :

1. Develop referent organizations to regulate relations between

stakeholder

2. focus on informal learning to find new solutions to shared

problems



Strengths & limitations

of the organismic metaphor



Strengths

- 1. Relation between organization & it's environment*
- 2. Focus on needs*
- 3. Identifying different species*
- 4. Stress the process of innovation*
- 5. Contribute to the theory & practice of organization*
- 6. Focus on ecology & inter_organizational relations*

Limitations

1. Organizations & their environments are far too concrete
2. Assumption of functional unity
3. The danger of the metaphor becoming an ideology